SPECIFICATIONS BOOKLET

For the 2026-2027 National Spanish Challenge (NSC)

Format & Length

Updated for the 2026-2027 assessment cycle.

Specifications by Division

Includes Vocabulary and Grammar integrated within Language Functions to promote communicative alignment and support proficiency-based instruction.

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Registration Tutorial

About Us

The **AATSP Exams** (formerly known as "National Spanish Examinations" or "NSE") is a program of the **American Association of Teachers of Spanish and Portuguese (AATSP)**.

Founded in 1917, the American Association of Teachers of Spanish and Portuguese (AATSP) is the oldest, largest, and most comprehensive language-specific professional association in the United States. Our nearly 10,000 members are educators from PreK-12 through graduate school who endorse our mission to promote, develop, and advance the teaching of Spanish and Portuguese worldwide.

The mission of the AATSP Exams program is to recognize student achievement and to promote language proficiency in the studies of Spanish & Portuguese. To this end, the AATSP Exams office is committed to providing teachers with high-quality assessment tools and offering students opportunities to develop and measure their linguistic competence and communication skills in Spanish and Portuguese.

About The National Spanish Challenge (NSC)

The **National Spanish Challenge (NSC)** is an online contest recommended for students in grades 1-6 that recognizes and awards your elementary students as they pass certain thresholds while learning Spanish.

The NSC is intended as a motivational, extra-curricular activity for students of members of the **American Association of Teachers of Spanish & Portuguese (AATSP)**. It is designed for the purposes of assessment, placement, and proficiency testing, intended for Elementary to Middle School students who are studying the Spanish language.

There are five Divisions of Competition based on the student's grade level, and how the student has been exposed to learning Spanish. Students who score well receive ribbons (gold, silver, bronze, purple, blue) and certificates based on their scores.

Teachers who administer the National Spanish Challenge (NSC) are eligible to apply for our teacher scholarship programs and enter their students in the NSC Coloring Contest "¡Concurso Colorido!"

About This Booklet

In this booklet, you will find the National Spanish Challenge (NSC) Divisions of Competition, Format, Length, and Maximum Scores per Division; Sample Questions from past tests for each section; and Vocabulary and Grammar sections integrated within Language Functions to promote communicative alignment and support proficiency-based instruction. You will also find the recommended pathways to connect with the National Spanish Exam (NSE) after completion of the NSC Divisions, and the NSC Prizes and Awards.

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NATIONAL SPANISH CHALLENGE (NSC)

Divisions of Competition, Placement, Format, Length, and Maximum Scores

The National Spanish Challenge offers two tracks: (1) a **NON-IMMERSION** track, and (2) an **IMMERSION** track.

Non-Immersion Track

Designed for students who are learning Spanish mainly in the classroom setting. These learners are exposed to Spanish during their regular school instruction, but may not use the language at home or in a bilingual environment.

Non-Immersion Track				
Grade	**Division**	**Question Types** All questions within each division adjust in difficulty based on grade levels.	**Number of Questions** **Points per Question**	**Max. Score**
Grade 1 **Grade 2**	**A1** **A2**	• Picture Identification with a spoken question.	20 questions x 3 points	(20 questions) **60 Points**
Grade 3 **Grade 4**	**B1** **B2**	• Picture Identification with a spoken question. • Interpersonal Communication: Logical Response • Interpretive Viewing	20 questions x 3 points 5 questions x 4 points 3 questions x 4 points	(28 questions) **92 Points**
Grade 5 **Grade 6**	**C1** **C2**	• Picture Identification with a spoken question. • Interpersonal Communication: Logical Response • Interpretive Viewing • Interpretive Reading/Sentences • Interpretive Reading/Texts	15 questions x 3 points 10 questions x 4 points 3 questions x 4 points 4 questions x 5 points 3 questions x 6 points	(35 questions) **135 Points**

- **Non-Immersion Track:** Students progress through **Divisions A → B → C**.
- After 6th grade, non-immersion students typically participate in the **National Spanish Exam (NSE)** contest, beginning at **Level 01**.

Immersion Track

Created for students enrolled in full or *partial immersion or dual-language programs, or those who regularly use Spanish in bilingual settings. These learners typically receive a higher level of daily exposure to Spanish across subjects. This pathway allows students with greater language contact to be challenged appropriately.

**For purposes of the National Spanish Challenge, partial immersion is defined as "Any program with 500 minutes per week in Spanish".*

Immersion Track				
Grade	**Division**	**Question Types** All questions within each division adjust in difficulty based on grade levels.	**Number of Questions** **Points per Question**	**Max. Score**
Grade 1 **Grade 2** **Grade 3**	**D1** **D2** **D3**	• Picture Identification with a spoken question. • Interpersonal Communication: Logical Response • Interpretive Viewing • Interpretive Reading/Sentences	18 questions x 3 points 6 questions x 4 points 3 questions x 4 points 3 questions x 5 points	(30 questions) **105 Points**
Grade 4 **Grade 5** **Grade 6**	**E1** **E2** **E3**	• Picture Identification with a spoken question. • Interpersonal Communication: Logical Response • Interpretive Viewing • Interpretive Reading/Sentences • Interpretive Reading/Texts	15 questions x 3 points 10 questions x 4 points 5 questions x 4 points 5 questions x 5 points 5 questions x 6 points	(40 questions) **160 Points**

- **Immersion Track:** Students progress through **Divisions D → E**
- After 6th grade, immersion students typically compete in the **National Spanish Exam, Level 1**.
- **Some full-immersion program schools start with the National Spanish Exam, Level 1, in Grade 5**.

National Spanish Challenge (NSC)

Sample Questions for Each Section

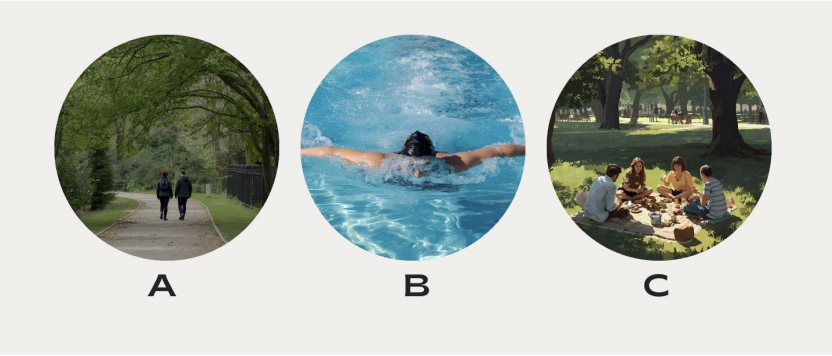
Please refer to the charts on pages 5 and 6 to associate the sample questions with the question types.

For Assessment Year 2026-2027

Section 1 | For Divisions A, B, C, D, E

Vocabulary: Picture Identification with Spoken Sentences
3 Points per question; number of questions varies with division.

Audio: Students hear *"Las personas caminan en el parque."*



○ A
○ B
○ C

Section 2 | For Divisions B, C, D, E

Interpersonal Communication: Logical Responses (5 questions; 4 points per question)
4 Points per question; number of questions varies with division.

- **Audio:** Students hear *"¿Cómo te llamas?"*

○ Es el profesor.
○ Me llamo Antonia.
○ Encantado, mucho gusto.

OR in a different example:

- **Audio:** Students hear *"¿Qué tiempo hace hoy?"*

○ Hace mucho calor.
○ Es verde.
○ Está lloviendo.

Section 3 | For Divisions B, C, D, E

Interpretive Viewing: Communication
4 Points per question; number of questions varies with division.

Students read: *"¿Dónde está el chico?"*

○ En el banco.
○ En la playa.
○ En las montañas.

OR in a different example:

Students read: *"¿Qué tiempo hace?"*

○ Está lloviendo.
○ Hace buen tiempo.
○ Hace mucho frío.

Section 4 | For Divisions C, D, E

Interpretive Reading: Sentences
5 Points per question; number of questions varies with division.

Instructions: Each of the following sentences is missing a word or phrase. Choose the response that best completes each sentence.

Ana corre maratones. Ella es muy _____.

○ perezosa.
○ talentoso.
○ atlética.

OR in a different example:

Tenemos dos perros y un gato. Tenemos _____ mascotas en total.

○ tres.
○ treinta.
○ once.

Section 5 | For Divisions C, E

Interpretive Reading: Texts

6 Points per question; number of questions varies with division.

Each item contains: 1) a piece of context in English, 2) an authentic text in Spanish, 3) a question in English

Linda is studying Spanish in school and wrote the following entry in her diary after having a fun day in her Spanish class.

¡Me gusta mucho la clase de español! Hoy aprendimos mucho vocabulario. Ahora sé el significado de estas palabras en español.

bandera
bolígrafo
cuaderno
escritorio
cartel
reloj
papel
tiza

Ahora voy a usar mi bolígrafo rojo y un papel para hacer un cartel. 😉

What types of new words did Linda learn in her Spanish class today?

○ Objects in the classroom.

○ Food items from a menu.

○ Articles of clothing.

Vocabulary and Grammar Specifications Integrated within Language Functions

The Vocabulary and Grammar sections are now fully integrated within suggested and adaptable Communicative Language Functions to promote communicative alignment and support proficiency-based instruction across all levels.

What are Communicative Language Functions?

These refer to the real-life purposes or intentions behind using language. Rather than focusing only on grammatical forms, these functions describe what learners are doing with the language, such as asking for or providing information, giving opinions, expressing emotions, or persuading someone. They are action-oriented and typically answer the question: *"Why is the speaker using language in this situation?"*. You can find the **suggested and adaptable** communicative language functions integrated into the content tables throughout this booklet, aligned with vocabulary and grammar to support meaningful language use.

Vocabulary in Context

Effective vocabulary instruction is:

- Contextualized – words are embedded in stories, dialogues, authentic texts, and communicative tasks.
- Purpose-driven – vocabulary is taught to support specific language functions (e.g., describing, narrating, persuading).
- Connected to grammar - learners encounter and use vocabulary alongside grammatical structures, reinforcing both simultaneously (e.g., learning food vocabulary while practicing expressions of preference using "*gustar*").

When vocabulary is integrated with language functions and grammar, students are more likely to internalize the meaning, form, and use of new words. This approach supports comprehensible input, fosters retention, and enables students to communicate with greater fluency, accuracy, and cultural relevance.

Grammar in Action

The grammar structures listed in this booklet are provided as a helpful reference to support students' language development in connection with communicative goals. Grammar is a natural part of language; it can often be **acquired through meaningful use, rich input, and authentic**

communication. Many teachers find that **inductive approaches** - in which students notice and internalize patterns through context - and exposure to **comprehensible input** promote deeper and more lasting learning.

Every classroom is different, and we recognize that **you know your classroom and your students best**. Whether through stories, conversations, interactive or contextualized tasks, or brief moments of clarification, the aim is to keep language purposeful and engaging, and connected to authentic language use. The grammar reference provided is meant to support you in doing just that.

You are encouraged to use the strategies that best align with your goals and your students' needs.

Specifications Chart

*National Spanish Challenge: Divisions A, B, C, D, E (*Equivalent to NSE Level 01)*

Communicative Functions / What learners can do	Vocabulary in Context	Grammar in Action
Introducing Oneself and Others: -Learners can state name, country of origin, basic personal information. Engaging in Everyday Communication: -Learners can greet and thank.	-Greetings -Basic professions -Courtesy phrases -Numbers 1-100 (1-30 Division A) (1-60 Division B) (1-100 Divisions C, D, E)	-Subject pronouns -Present tense of *ser* -Gender and number agreement -Present tense of *tener* for age and possession
Describing People, Things, and Places: -Learners can give simple details to refer to people, things, and places. -Learners can give details on the location of objects. -Learners can give simple details to refer to the weather.	-Basic colors -Basic physical characteristics -Simple description of things, personality traits -Basic emotions -Immediate family -Pets -Basic parts of the body -Basic school and classroom items -Basic weather expressions	-Gender of nouns ending in -o, -a -Plural of nouns -Adjective agreement -Present tense of *ser* and *estar* -Present tense of *tener* -Possessive adjectives sing. & plural *(mi, tu, su, mis, tus, sus)* and possessive use of "*de* + noun" -Definite articles *(el, la, los, las)* -Indefinite articles *(un, una, unos, unas)*. -Prepositions to indicate location
Expressing Likes and Dislikes: -Learners can say what they like/dislike doing or eating.	-Basic food -Basic pastimes & leisure activities -Hobbies -Basic sports	-Verb *gustar* -Indirect object pronouns *(me, te, le/les)*
Talking about Daily Routines, Habits, Leisure Time, and Scheduling Needs: -Learners can talk about what they do daily or on weekends. -Learners can tell the time.	-Time -Days of the week -Months of the year -Dates -Basic school subjects -Basic chores	-Present tense of regular -ar, -er, -ir verbs -Basic irregular *ir* and *tener* -Contractions with *"al"* and *"del"* -Idiomatic expressions with *tener (tener hambre, sed, frío, calor, prisa, miedo)*
Asking and Answering Simple Questions: -Learners can ask for basic information using familiar question words.	-Questions common in the classroom -Asking for basic information	-Question formation and question words *(dónde, cómo, qué, por qué, cuándo)*

Pathways from the National Spanish Challenge (NSC) to the National Spanish Exam (NSE)

Non-Immersion Track

- Students progress through Divisions A → B → C.
- After 6th grade, non-immersion students typically participate in the National Spanish Exam Contest, beginning at Level 01.

Non-Immersion Track	
Grades	**Division**
Grade 1	A1
Grade 2	A2
Grade 3	B1
Grade 4	B2
Grade 5	C1
Grade 6	C2
Grade 7	NSE 01
Grade 8	NSE 1

Immersion Track

- Students progress through Divisions D → E
- After 6th grade, immersion students typically compete in the National Spanish Exam, Level 1.
- Some full-immersion program schools start with the National Spanish Exam, Level 1 in Grade 5.

Immersion Track				
Grades	**Division**	**Alternate Pathway for NSC**	**Possible Pathways for Full Immersion or Bilingual Programs**	
Grade 1	**D1**			
Grade 2	**D2**			
Grade 3	**D3**			
Grade 4	**E1**			
Grade 5	**E2**		**NSE 01**	**NSE 1**
Grade 6	**E3**	**NSE 01**	**NSE 1**	**NSE 2**
Grade 7	**NSE 1**	**NSE1**	**NSE 2**	**NSE 3**
Grade 8	**NSE 2**	**NSE2**	**NSE 3**	**NSE 4**

Prizes, Awards, and Opportunities

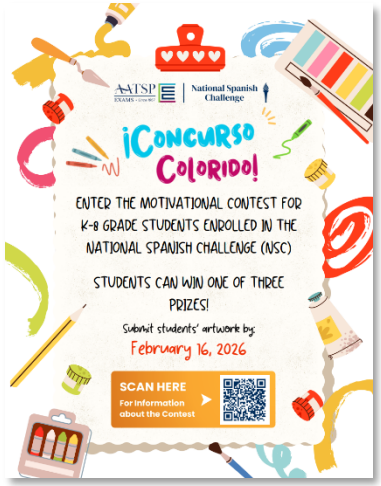
Prize Ribbons

Students participating in the National Spanish Challenge (NSC) will receive the following awards based on the number of points that they earn:

Printable Certificates

Printable certificate templates are available for download at our website: https://nationalspanishexam.org/awards/prizes/#certificates

Student Awards and Scholarship Opportunities



Coloring Contest for NSC Participating Students

In order to engage more students in their linguistic studies, propagate more interest in multiculturalism, and encourage students to express themselves, the AATSP Exams now offers young students the opportunity to participate in the NSC Coloring Contest – regardless of their scores on the National Spanish Challenge (NSC) itself. Students that have participated in, or that will be participating, in the National Spanish Challenge (NSC) have a new opportunity to let their creativity shine!

¡Concurso Coloridо! typically begins accepting submissions in the Fall and are due by the second or third week of February. Specific deadlines vary by year.

For specific deadlines, rules, requirements, and contest prizes, visit our website at:
https://nationalspanishexam.org/awards/k8contest/

Kevin Cessna Buscemi (KCB) Global Citizen Scholarship

Students over the age of 8 who are registered to take the next NSC and have won an "Outstanding Achievement" ribbon (gold, silver, or bronze) could apply for **virtual** placement in a one-week language immersion program through our partnership with United Planet.

Applications for the KCB Global Citizen Scholarship typically open in the Fall and are due the first week of February. Specific deadlines vary by year.

For specific deadlines, rules, and requirements, visit our website at:
https://nationalspanishexam.org/awards/students/global-citizen-scholarship/

Teacher Awards and Scholarship Opportunities

AATSP members who administer the National Spanish Challenge (NSC) are eligible to apply for the following awards:

AATSP Conference Stipend Award

Awards support to attend the AATSP Annual Conference, sponsored in part by Lingco Language Labs.

Applications typically open in the Fall and are due sometime in December. Specific deadlines vary by year. For specific deadlines, rules, and requirements, visit our website at: https://nationalspanishexam.org/awards/teachers/teacher-conference-stipends/

Teacher Travel Abroad Scholarship

An international immersion and professional development opportunity, sponsored in part by The Pulsera Project.

Applications typically open in the Fall and are due early January. Specific deadlines vary by year. For specific deadlines, rules, and requirements, visit our website at: https://nationalspanishexam.org/awards/teachers/teacher-travel-scholarship/

AATSP Programs Support Award

Awards stipends for regalia, ceremonies, and classroom initiatives to AATSP members who participate in other AATSP programs in addition to the AATSP Exams; sponsored in part by Xperitas Immersion Travel.

Applications typically open in the Fall and are due in Winter/Spring. Specific deadlines vary by year. For specific deadlines, rules, and requirements, visit our website at: https://nationalspanishexam.org/awards/teachers/programs-award/

AATSP Rising Educator Award

ATSP Members who are full-time Spanish/Portuguese teachers in the early stages of their careers and administer one of our exams are eligible to apply to complete an online professional development course with the University of Salamanca.

Applications typically open around October. For specific deadlines, rules, and requirements, visit our website at: https://nationalspanishexam.org/awards/teachers/programs-award/

Resources

Where To Register
To begin your registration, visit www.nationalspanishexam.org on a desktop computer or **click here**.

Video Tutorials
Scan the code to learn more about the registration process or **click here to view**.

Student Modifications
Since the NSC is not a timed examination, requests for extra time are not needed. Requests for other modifications should be submitted by December 15th. Please scan the code for more information.

Technical Requirements
Scan the code to learn about **technical requirements** and how to **disable translation features**.

Ribbons and Certificates
Scan the code to learn more about NSC ribbons and certificates.

Teacher & Student Awards
Scan the code to learn more about **scholarship and contest opportunities** for teachers and students.

Help Center
Scan the code to access our **Help Center**, complete with tutorials, F.A.Q.'s, and the AATSP Exams calendar.

Frequently Asked Questions
Scan the code to gather quick answers to **frequently asked questions** about our organization, payment, and more.

Live Chat Available
Need help with Lingco?
Click on the question mark button at the bottom-right corner of the screen to start a live chat with tech support (WEEKDAYS 8AM-4PM CT).