SPECIFICATIONS BOOKLET

For the 2026-2027 National Spanish Exam (NSE)

Format & Length

Updated for the 2026-2027 assessment cycle.

Specifications by Level

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 Exam (NSE)

The **National Spanish Exam (NSE)** is an online, motivational competition that recognizes, stimulates, and promotes students' linguistic competence and proficiency in Spanish. In addition to the contest, the NSE is a standardized online assessment for grades 6-12, that measures both content standards (vocabulary and grammar) and performance standards (reading and listening comprehension). This tool provides valuable feedback on the students' proficiency, monitoring and tracking their progress and development each year.

Individual results are available immediately, and national results are usually released during the first week of May. Students who place above the 75th percentile at the national level can receive medals (gold, silver, bronze, honorable mention) and are eligible to apply for several types of scholarships. Medals are shipped directly to schools at no additional cost, and usually arrive within 4- 8 weeks after national results are released.

Teachers receive individual reports for each student disaggregating data in various ways so that they may identify strengths and weaknesses of individual students for specific standards, measurement categories, learner outcomes, show growth from one year to the next, and/or report other variables as needed. Teachers who administer the NSE are also eligible to apply for a variety of awards and scholarships.

Registration Dates:	Examination Window:
October 15, 2026 – February 1, 2027	**February 22 – April 2, 2027**

About This Booklet

In this booklet, you will find the updated **Format & Length** chart, the revised **Vocabulary and Grammar** specifications for the 2026–2027 National Spanish Exam, the Level Placement Guide with corresponding references to ACTFL and CEFR proficiency levels, and the **NSE Contest Categories**. The Vocabulary and Grammar sections are now fully integrated within Language Functions to promote communicative alignment and support proficiency-based instruction across all levels.

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NATIONAL SPANISH EXAM (NSE)

Format and Length | Updated for 2026-2027

Each level of the NATIONAL SPANISH EXAM has two sections of tests:

1. CONTENT SECTION: Vocabulary in Context + Grammar in Action
2. PERFORMANCE SECTION: Reading/Interpretive Communication + Listening/Interpretive Communication

	Test 1 CONTENT (40% of Total)		**Test 2 PERFORMANCE (60% of Total)**		
	Time: 40 minutes Questions: 38 Points: 40		Time: 40 minutes Questions: 28 Points: 60		
LEVELS	**VOCABULARY IN CONTEXT**	**GRAMMAR IN ACTION**	**READING/ INTERPRETIVE COMMUNICATION**	**LISTENING/ INTERPRETIVE COMMUNICATION**	**TOTAL**
Level 01 Novice low/mid <A1	20 Questions 20 points	18 Questions 20 points	14 Questions 30 points	14 Questions 30 points	**66 Questions 100 points**
Level 1 Novice mid/high A1	20 Questions 20 points	18 Questions 20 points	14 Questions 30 points	14 Questions 30 points	**66 Questions 100 points**
Level 2 Novice high/Int. Low A1/A2	20 Questions 20 points	18 Questions 20 points	14 Questions 30 points	14 Questions 30 points	**66 Questions 100 points**
Level 3 Intermediate low/mid A2/B1	20 Questions 20 points	18 Questions 20 points	14 Questions 30 points	14 Questions 30 points	**66 Questions 100 points**

Level 4 **Intermediate mid/high** **B1/B2**	20 Questions 20 points	18 Questions 20 points	14 Questions 30 points	14 Questions 30 points	**66 Questions** **100 points**
Level 5 **Intermediate high / Advanced low** **B2**	20 Questions 20 points	18 Questions 20 points	14 Questions 30 points	14 Questions 30 points	**66 Questions** **100 points**
Level 6 **Advanced low/mid/high** **B2/C1**	20 Questions 20 points	18 Questions 20 points	14 Questions 30 points	14 Questions 30 points	**66 Questions** **100 points**

NATIONAL SPANISH EXAM (NSE)

Level Placement Guide | Updated for 2026-2027

For the National Spanish Exam (NSE), level placement is at the **instructor's discretion**. Students are not allowed to repeat levels. Determining the appropriate LEVEL to administer the NSE should be decided by the teacher and the student. Please use the following chart as a guideline:

Level 01	Recommended for entry-level beginners The course content is equivalent to the first half of the Spanish 1 syllabus. (Novice low/mid ; <a1)
Level 1	Students whose course content is equivalent to the second-half of the Spanish 1 syllabus or entry-level for any program where the course content is equivalent to a full year of Spanish 1. (Novice mid/high; A1)
Level 2	Students whose course content is equivalent to the Spanish 2 syllabus. (Novice high/Int. Low; A1/A2)
Level 3	Students whose course content is equivalent to the Spanish 3 syllabus. (Intermediate low/mid; A2/B1)
Level 4	Students whose course content is equivalent to a Spanish 4 curriculum. (Intermediate mid/high; B1/B2). ***Note:*** *If an* ***Honors Spanish 3*** *course is offered with content and proficiency expectations comparable to* ***Spanish 4,*** *teachers may, at their professional discretion, register students for* ***Level 4****. This may be particularly appropriate for juniors and seniors who have demonstrated the necessary proficiency and wish to showcase their achievement in the* ***National Spanish Examinations (NSE)*** *as part of their college applications.*
Level 5	Students whose course content is equivalent to the Spanish 5 or AP Spanish syllabuses. (Intermediate high/Advanced low; B2)
Level 6	Students whose course content is equivalent to the Spanish 6 or AP Literature syllabuses. (Advanced low/mid/high; B2/C1)
AP Language / IB-SL	Students enrolled in a course labeled AP Language or IB-SL should be registered to take the current year's NSE at one level higher than the course in which they were enrolled the previous year. For example, an AP Language/IB-SL student who sat for the exam at Level 4 in 2025-2026 should be placed in Level 5 in 2026-2027. Under no circumstance should an AP Language/IB-SL student take the NSE at lower than Level 4.

AP Literature / IB-HL	Students enrolled in a course labeled AP Literature or IB-HL must take the NSE at either Level 5 or 6. These students should be enrolled to take the current year's NSE at one level higher than the course in which they were enrolled in the previous year. Under no circumstance should an AP Literature/IB-HL student take the NSE at lower than Level 5.

NATIONAL SPANISH EXAM (NSE)

Category Placement Guide | Updated for 2026-2027

The National Spanish Exam (NSE) is used to measure the performance and achievement of students who are studying the Spanish language in the United States. In order to allow students with like-exposure to compete against one another at the national level, **three categories of exam competition** have been defined.

Classroom Experience	A student whose only (or main) contact with Spanish is in a classroom setting.
Outside Experience	A student who has had specific experiences with Spanish beyond the classroom: • The student's native language is one of the following Romance languages closely related to Spanish: Catalan, Galician, Italian, Sicilian, and Portuguese. These languages share substantial similarities with Spanish, including grammatical structures, vocabulary, and phonetics, which may provide a linguistic advantage. (***Note:*** *Although* ***French*** *and* ***Romanian*** *are also Romance languages, they generally do not provide the same degree of linguistic similarity to Spanish and therefore are not included in this list. However, teachers may exercise their professional judgment in exceptional cases if they believe that a student's native language background has provided a significant linguistic advantage in Spanish.*) • The student has been enrolled in a Spanish immersion or dual language program for the prior 3 years or more. • The student is a heritage speaker who has had exposure to Spanish but limited practice in their home environment. The student may hear or speak some Spanish at home.
Bilingual	A student who comes from a home where Spanish is the primary language, and the student can communicate in both Spanish and English fluently and quite accurately.

National Spanish Exam

Specifications for Vocabulary and Grammar,

through Communicative Functions

for Real-World Communication

For Assessment Years 2026-2027 and After

Important Note to Teachers

The communicative language functions, vocabulary areas, and grammar topics presented throughout this booklet are intended as **suggested instructional guidelines** rather than a rigid scope and sequence.

Proficiency-oriented language learning is inherently **flexible, cumulative, and learner-centered.** Teachers are encouraged to adapt the sequence, pacing, contextualization, and depth of instruction to meet the needs of their students, local curriculum, and instructional goals.

Since language acquisition is a continuous process, students continue to revisit communicative functions, vocabulary, and language through authentic, increasingly complex communicative contexts as they progress toward higher levels of proficiency.

Specifications for Vocabulary and Grammar, through Communicative Functions for Real-World Communication

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

Vocabulary cannot be taught in isolation. Learning individual words without context may lead to superficial understanding and limited ability to use the language effectively in real-world situations. Instead, vocabulary should be introduced and reinforced within meaningful, communicative contexts that reflect how the words are used naturally by speakers of the language.

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.

Use the strategies that best align with your goals and your students' needs.

Teachers are encouraged to view these specifications as a framework for developing communicative proficiency rather than as a checklist of isolated vocabulary and grammar topics to be covered.

Level 01 (Novice Low/Mid - <A1)

Communicative Language Functions / What learners can do	Vocabulary in Context	Grammar in Action
Introducing Oneself and Others: -Learners can state name, country of origin, basic and personal information. **Engaging in Everyday Communication:** -Learners can greet and thank.	-Greetings, titles -Basic professions -Nationalities -Courtesy phrases -Numbers 1-100: numbers 1-30 are written as one word up to *treinta:* ***dieciséis, veintidós, etc.***	-Subject pronouns -Present tense of ***ser*** -Gender and number agreement -Present tense of ***tener*** for age
Describing People, Things, and Places: -Learners can give simple details to refer to people, things and places. -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 and placement -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).***

Expressing Likes and Dislikes: -Learners can say what they like/dislike doing or eating.	-Basic food -Basic pastimes & leisure activities -Hobbies -Basic sports	-Verbs ***gustar*** and ***encantar*** -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)***

Level 1 (Novice Mid-High / A1)

Communicative Language Functions / What learners can do	Vocabulary in Context	Grammar in Action
Describing People, Places and Things -Learners can describe people, places, and things using simple phrases.	-Colors -Physical and personality traits -Rooms in a house -Immediate family -Professions -Pets -Basic parts of the body -Classroom items -Hispanic countries and their capitals -Simple geographical terms	-Adjective agreement and position -***Ser*** vs. ***estar*** -Present tense of ***tener*** -Gender of nouns ending in ***-o, -a*** -Number of nouns -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)***
Expressing Needs, Wants, and Obligations -Learners can express needs, wants, and obligations in everyday situations.	-Clothing -Parts of the body -Basic chores -School items -Basic school subjects	-Expression: ***Tener que*** + infinitive -Idiomatic uses of ***tener (tener hambre, sed, frío, calor, prisa, miedo)*** Present tense of: ***tener, poder, querer, necesitar*** -Subject-verb agreement -Negation
Describing the Weather and Environment -Learners can talk about the weather and the environment using simple phrases.	-Weather expressions -Nature (basic) -Animals	-Present tense of ***hacer*** used in weather expressions (***Hace frío, hace calor, etc)*** -Present tense verbs

Talking about Daily Routines and Leisure -Learners can describe daily and leisure activities using familiar vocabulary. -Learners can talk about weekend routines.	-Leisure activities -Sports -Days of the week -Months -The time	-Present tense of regular verbs -Stem-changing verbs
Asking and Answering Questions -Learners can ask and answer simple questions related to familiar topics. -Learners can make a reservation at a restaurant, order food, and ask and answer basic related questions. -Learners can shop for clothes.	-Greetings -Introductions -Common questions in the classroom -Basic questions and expressions in a restaurant -Preferences (books, movies, food, TV programs, series, school subjects) -Food -Basic clothes	-Question words -Word order of questions -Subject pronouns (***vosotros**:* only for recognition of pronoun and verb form identification, not for production) -Personal ***a*** -Present progressive -Verbs ***gustar, encantar***, ***preferir*** -Indirect object pronouns ***(me, te, le/les)***
Talking about Future Plans -Learners can talk about future plans in a basic way. -Learners can talk about weekend plans. -Learners can talk about travel plans.	-Travel -Buildings in a city -Transport -The airport	-Immediate future (***ir* + *a*** + infinitive) -Present tense verbs -Contractions (***al/del***)
Describing Quantity and Order -Learners can describe order and quantity in simple terms.	-Cardinal numbers 1-100 -Ordinal numbers 1st-10th -Dates -Basic math expressions	-Ordinal and cardinal numbers

Level 2 (Novice High - Intermediate Low / A2-B1)

Communicative Language Functions / What learners can do	Vocabulary in Context	Grammar in Action
Narrating Past Events -Learners can describe events or personal experiences in the past using simple phrases.	-Pastimes (expanded) -Holidays -Family events -School experiences	-The preterit tense -Adverbs of time -Use of ***acabar de*** **+ infinitive** ***e.g.: Acabo de lavar el carro. Quedó bien limpio.*** -Introduction to the imperfect tense (only for exposure & comprehension, not production)
Giving Commands and Instructions -Learners can give basic commands and instructions in everyday contexts.	-Chores -Classroom tasks -Personal care -Food preparation -Food (expanded) -Basic computing	-Imperative mood -Regular and irregular commands -Negation
Talking about Future Plans and Intentions -Learners can talk about what they or others will do using the simple future tense.	-Professions (expanded) -Travel -Transport -Directions -The seven continents	-Future tense (regular verbs) -Expressions with: • ***Pensar*** + infinitive • ***Deber*** + infinitive • ***Tratar de*** + infinitive

Describing and Comparing People and Things -Learners can express comparisons, descriptions, and preferences using familiar structures.	-Professions (expanded) -Clothing (expanded) -Personality traits -Nationalities -Parts of a home -Weather -Geographic terms -Nature	-Verbs: ***saber, conocer*** -Adjectives -Conjunctions (***pero*** vs. ***sino, e/y, u/o***); -Gender of nouns ending in ***-dad, -ción, -ma, -ista*** ***e.g.: La universidad, la comunidad; la canción, la lección; el programa, el problema; el o la turista, el o la deportista.*** -Adverbs of quantity
Talking about Daily Routines and Self-Care -Learners can describe their daily routine, school life, and personal hygiene habits.	-Daily chores -School subjects -Five senses, body parts -Sports -Physical characteristics -Personality traits	-Reflexive verbs -Indirect object -Reflexive pronouns -Prepositional pronouns (prep. + pronoun: ***para mí, conmigo, sin ti, etc.***) -Stem-changing verbs -Common irregular verbs
Describing Location and Giving Directions -Learners can describe where people, places, or objects are and give simple directions.	-Buildings in a city -Maps -Hotel staff, rooms, items -Classroom objects	-Simple prepositions: ***contra, desde, entre, durante, etc.*** -Compound prepositions: ***antes de, debajo de, después de, encima de, etc.*** -Verb ***estar*** + location -Conjunctions
Connecting and Sequencing Ideas -Learners can narrate and describe events using connectors and sequence adverbs.	-Storytelling -Leisure -Sports (expanded) -Travel experiences	-Adverbs of order and manner -Suffix ***-mente*** -Negation words (***nada, nunca, jamás***) -Uses of ***ningún*** and ***algún*** and their related forms -Use of ***u*** instead of ***o*** -***Pero*** vs. ***sino***

Level 3 (Intermediate Low-Mid / A2-B1)

Communicative Language Functions / What learners can do	Vocabulary in Context	Grammar in Action
Narrating Past Events -Learners can describe events or personal experiences in the past.	-Pastimes (expanded) -Holidays -Family events -School experiences	-Preterit tense (regular and irregular) -Adverbs of time -Introduction to the imperfect tense
Narrating Habitual Past Events -Learners can describe events or personal experiences that were habitual in the past.	-Pastimes -Holidays -Family events -School experiences -Childhood and related vocabulary -Chores and obligations	-Imperfect tense -Adverbs of time
Narrating in Multiple Time Frames -Learners can describe personal experiences or events using a combination of past tenses, introducing background context.	-Human life cycle -Holidays -Sports	-Contrast of imperfect vs. preterit -Adverbs of time

Talking about Actions or Experiences that Happened at an Unspecified Time Before Now -Learners can describe what someone has done today or this week. -Learners can share life experiences without specifying when they happened. -Learners can say what one has never or has already done. -Learners can research, summarize, and present current events from various sources, demonstrating understanding of key facts and perspectives.	-Life experiences: travel, milestones -Routine accomplishments: homework, chores, goals -Daily life: meals, appointments, school projects -Expressions of time (***ya*, *todavía*, *nunca*, *alguna vez*, *muchas veces*, *hoy*, *esta semana)*** -Media: things you've read, watched, posted, or heard -Community and environment: experiences with festivals, natural events, or social participation	-Present perfect tense -Related adverbials of time ***e.g.: ayer, mientras, ya, todavía***
Describing What Someone Had Done Before Another Past Event Occurred -Learners can describe past actions that happened before other past actions	**-**Narratives and storytelling -Holidays and traditions -Family and home life -School life -Work and projects -Health and wellness	-Past Perfect tense *(pluscuamperfecto)* -Related adverbials of time
Expressing Future Possibilities and Hypothetical Situations -Learners can express future events or hypothetical outcomes with appropriate verb tenses.	-Work expressions -Professions	-Irregular future tense -Conditionals -Use of the infinitive after prepositions ***e.g.: para estudiar, antes de salir***

Giving Opinions and Expressing Doubt or Uncertainty -Learners can express opinions, preferences, and doubt using more complex sentence structures.	-Communication media -Art -Religions, basic terms	-Use of subjunctive (introductory level) -Impersonal ***'se'*** -Indirect commands
Describing People, Things, and States of Mind in Detail -Learners can describe people, objects, or feelings in more depth using precise vocabulary.	-Personality -Physical traits -Fabrics -Parts of clothing	-Adjectives as nouns: ***e.g.: el grande, la roja*** -Past participle used as an adjective: ***e.g.: abierto, abierta, cerrado, cerrada, roto, rota, olvidado, olvidada, etc***. -Adverbs of degree **e.g.: *bastante, demasiado, muy, poco***
Asking and Responding to More Detailed Questions -Learners can ask and respond to more nuanced questions involving past events or abstract topics. -Learners can express purpose and goals, cause or reason, can describe movement through a place, talk about duration or deadlines.	-School subjects -Mathematical expressions -Doctor visit -Parts of the body	-Indirect and direct object pronouns together ***e.g.: me lo dijo, te lo di, se lo regalé*** -Verbs that use IO pronouns: ***e.g.: faltar, quedar, etc.*** -Correlative conjunctions: **o…o, ni…ni** -Prepositions: **para** vs. ***por*** ***e.g: Estudio para aprender. / Camino por el parque.***

Comparing and Contrasting Ideas, People, or Objects -Learners can compare and contrast ideas or objects using appropriate structures. -Learners can compare houses and homes across different countries and cultures, highlighting similarities and differences in structure, style, and daily life.	-Geography -Astronomy terms -Home and housing	-Comparison structures ***(más…que, tan…como)*** -Adverbs of comparison ***(más, menos, tan, tanto)*** -Passive voice (introductory exposure)

Level 4 (Intermediate Mid-High / B1-B2)

Communicative Language Functions / What learners can do	Vocabulary in Context	Grammar in Action
Expressing Hypothetical Situations (probable & possible, improbable, & impossible) -Learners can talk about hypothetical or imagined situations Probable: ***e.g.*: It is cloudy. If it rains I will not go to my golf practice.** Improbable: ***e.g.*: If I won the lottery I would travel around the world.** Impossible: ***e.g.*: If you had called me I would have given you a ride to the meeting.** Why didn't you call me?	-Global issues -Economics -Politics -Banking	-Probable condition: present tense + future for probable and possible condition. **e.g.: *Está nublado, si llueve no iré a la práctica de golf*.** -Improbable Condition: imperfect subjunctive + conditional **e.g.: *Si ganara la lotería viajaría por el mundo*.** -Conditional perfect for impossible conditions. **e.g.: *Si me hubieras llamado te habría llevado a la reunión. ¿Por qué no me llamaste?*** ****

Expressing Wishes, Hopes, and Doubts -Learners can express emotions, wishes, and hopes about others' actions using the subjunctive. -Learners can express a possibility that depends on a certain condition. -Learners can express uncertainty or doubt about a past action, a hypothetical situation about the past, or a feeling or emotion about a past event.	-Health care professions -Government -Social issues -Travel -Emergencies -Personal needs	-Present subjunctive. **e.g.:** *Es muy importante que* ***tengas*** *cuidado con las redes sociales.* -Imperfect subjunctive **e.g.:** Si ***estuviera*** en Madrid, iría al Museo del Prado. -Present perfect subjunctive **e.g.:** *No creo que* ***hayan ido*** *al concierto.* (uncertainty); *Espero que lo* ***hayan pasado*** *lindo en sus vacaciones.* (hypothetical); *Me alegro de que te* ***haya ido*** *bien en el trabajo.* (feeling or emotion)
Describing Present Actions with Nuance -Learners can communicate present, ongoing, or habitual actions with greater nuance by choosing appropriate verbs and expressing them correctly in varied contexts.	-Nature and environment, -Astronomy	-Present tense spelling changes *-cer/cir* ***(e.g.: conocer, traducir)*** *-ger/gir* ***(e.g.: escoger, exigir)****, -guir(****e.g.: seguir, distinguir)*** -Accent changes ***(e.g.: reír, enviar, actuar)***
Referring to People and Things Using Precise Expressions -Learners can use relative pronouns and reciprocal actions.	-Arts -Architecture -Historical terms -Literature	-Relative pronouns ***e.g.: que, quien, el/la que, lo que, cuyo/cuya/etc.*** -Reciprocal reflexives -Definite article with modified proper nouns -Neuter article 'lo' to refer to abstract qualities. ***e.g.: Lo bueno*** de esta situación es que hemos aprendido algo.
Making Comparisons and Distinctions -Learners can normalize adjectives and use short forms appropriately.	-Descriptions in Art: • Color • Shapes • Materials	-Normalization of adjectives ***e.g.:*** Me gusta **el verde**. ¿Me puedes dar **el grande**? -Short forms of adjectives ***e.g.: gran, buen, mal.***

Levels 5-6: Advanced Proficiency Framework

Beginning with Levels 5 and 6, Vocabulary in Context is organized around six broad thematic areas that align with the AP Spanish Language and Culture framework: Families and Communities, Language and Culture, Art and Creativity, Science and Technology, Contemporary Life, and **Global Contexts.** These themes provide authentic contexts for vocabulary development while **communicative language functions remain the primary organizing principle.**

The communicative language functions, vocabulary areas, and grammar topics presented in these levels are intended as **suggested instructional guidelines rather than a rigid scope and sequence.** Teachers are encouraged to adapt the sequence, pacing, and contextualization of instruction to meet the needs of their students and local curriculum.

Language acquisition is a continuous process, and students may revisit communicative functions, vocabulary, and language forms multiple times as they progress toward higher levels of proficiency.

*We have included expanded vocabulary glossaries in our practice sections as optional instructional resources. They provide examples of high-frequency academic and thematic vocabulary commonly encountered in authentic texts and communicative tasks at the **Intermediate High to Advanced proficiency levels.** The lists are illustrative rather than exhaustive and may be adapted to meet local curriculum and instructional goals.

How the National Spanish Examinations Support Success in AP Spanish Language and Culture

The National Spanish Examinations develop the interpretive language skills, language resources, and cultural understanding that provide a strong foundation for success in AP Spanish Language and Culture and other advanced Spanish coursework.

The AP Spanish Language and Culture course and exam are organized around three modes of communication:

1. **Interpretive Communication**
2. **Interpersonal Communication**
3. **Presentational Communication**

The NSE primarily develops **Interpretive Communication,** while also strengthening the language resources students need for the other two modes.

NSE Component	Skills Developed	Connections to AP Spanish
Reading Comprehension	Interpret authentic texts, infer meaning, identify main ideas, analyze details	Interpretive Reading
Listening Comprehension	Understand authentic spoken Spanish from different speakers and accents	Interpretive Listening
Vocabulary in Context	Interpret vocabulary through context rather than memorization	Supports all AP tasks
Grammar in Context	Develop accurate language use through engagement with authentic texts	Improves writing and speaking accuracy
Cultural Knowledge	Identify and interpret cultural products, practices, and perspectives	Essential across all AP themes
Authentic Materials	Navigate and interpret a variety of authentic text types and media	Mirrors AP source materials

Level 5 (Intermediate High-Adv. Low/ B2) *Students whose course content is equivalent to the Spanish 5 or AP Spanish.*

Communicative Language Functions / What learners can do	Vocabulary in Context	Grammar in Action
Talking about Hypothetical Past Outcomes -Learners can explain what would have happened in a different past scenario using advanced verb forms.	**Language and Culture** -Personal and public identities -Cultural identity -Language and bilingualism -Stereotypes and cultural perspectives -Indigenous communities	-Past perfect subjunctive in if clauses ***e.g.:*** *Si* ***hubiera estudiado*** *más habría obtenido una A en mi examen de Ciencia.* -Conditional perfect ***e.g.***: *Si hubiera estudiado más* ***habría obtenido*** *una A en mi examen de Ciencia*
Referring to General Activities or Abstract Concepts -Learners can use infinitives as nouns to describe actions or ideas.	**Science and Technology** -Health and wellness -Innovation and ethics -Basic biology -Medical advances -Communication technologies -Artificial Intelligence -Social media -Scientific advances	-Use of infinitive as a noun ***e.g.: Caminar*** hace bien a la salud.
Describing Cause, Effect, or Consequence -Learners can talk about outcomes and cause-effect using advanced verb tenses.	**Global Contexts** -Ecosystem -Environment -Natural disasters -History -Human Rights -Immigration and migration -Globalization -Politics -Government and citizenship -Elections and civic participation -Historical events and their impact	-Future perfect tense -Sequence of tenses -Passive voice

Expressing Meaning with Precision and Nuance -Learners can describe people, places, or ideas with precision by using vocabulary and grammar that reflect subtle differences in meaning (e.g., distinguishing between "el capital" and "la capital" or between "un gran hombre" and "un hombre grande") in contexts such as health, the arts, and outdoor life.	**Art and Creativity** -Beauty and aesthetics -Theatre and performing arts -Literature and artistic expression -Architecture -Nature -Artistic expression and cultural heritage -Cultural preservation -Music and film	-Changes of adjective position -Nouns with meaning determined by gender ***e.g.: el/la capital***
Linking Ideas and Describing Relationships -Learners can make connections between people, events, or ideas. -Learners can provide detailed descriptions and clarifications. -Learners can justify opinions with supporting reasons.	**Families and Communities** -Social issues -Community life -Demographic changes -Civic engagement and social values -Volunteerism and leadership	-Relative pronouns ***e.g.: que, quien, el/la que, lo que, cuyo/cuya/etc.*** -Verbs requiring prepositions before an infinitive (empezar a, cesar de, pensar en)

Level 6 (Advanced Low-Mid-High / B2-C1) *Students whose course content is equivalent to the Spanish 6 or AP Spanish Literature and Culture course.*

The interpretive reading skills developed through the NSE naturally support students enrolled in **AP Spanish Literature and Culture** by strengthening inferencing, literary interpretation, vocabulary in context, recognition of tone, author's purpose, figurative language, and cultural analysis.

Communicative Language Functions / What learners can do	Vocabulary in Context	Grammar in Action
Expressing Complex Hypothetical Past Situations -Learners can discuss alternative outcomes in past events, using appropriate tense combinations to express hypothetical reasoning or reflection. -Learners can express regrets, missed opportunities, or imagined consequences using complex "if" clauses.	**Global Contexts** -Law and justice -Human rights and social justice -Migration and international relations -War, peace, and conflict resolution -Sustainability and climate change -Global cooperation and international organizations -Global health	-Past perfect subjunctive ***(hubiera ido, hubiese estudiado***) ***e.g.:*** *Si* ***hubiera estudiado*** *más habría obtenido una A en mi examen de Ciencia. Si me* ***hubieras llamado*** *te habría ayudado. ¿Por qué no me llamaste?* -Conditional perfect ***e.g.:*** *Si me hubieras llamado te* ***habría ayudado.*** -If clauses with past subjunctive *(pluscuamperfecto del subjuntivo)* + conditional perfect *(condicional compuesto)* ***e.g.: Si hubiera estudiado más, habría obtenido una A en mi examen de Ciencia.***
Describing Uncertainty or Subjectivity in Complex Clauses -Learners can express doubt, emotion, or judgment about past events using the correct verb choices. -Learners can react to hypothetical or unconfirmed information from journalistic or social contexts.	**Language and Culture** -Cultural identity and heritage -Journalism and mass media -Public opinion -Intercultural communication -Linguistic diversity and bilingualism -Heritage language communities -Cultural perspectives and stereotypes	-The imperfect subjunctive ***e.g.: tuviera, encontrara.*** -Imperfect subjunctive in adverbial clauses, after negative/indefinite antecedents ***e.g.:*** *Estuve feliz de* ***que me dieran la oportunidad****)*

Using Precise and Nuanced Language in Formal Contexts -Learners can use specialized or academic vocabulary accurately in context. -Learners can formulate well-structured arguments	**Science and Technology** -Scientific research and innovations -Technology and ethics -Emerging technologies -Communication media -Artificial Intelligence -Digital citizenship and information literacy -Data privacy	-Mastery of relative pronouns ***e.g.: que, quien, el/la que, lo que, cuyo/cuya/etc.*** -Verbs requiring prepositions before an infinitive ***e.g.: empezar a, cesar de, pensar en.*** -Subordinating conjunctions (mientras, como, etc.)
Making Detailed Comparisons and Distinctions -Learners can make nuanced comparisons between abstract concepts, texts, or events.	**Art and Creativity** -Beauty and aesthetics -Literature and literary analysis -Visual and performing arts -Architecture and cultural heritage -Artistic movements and cultural expression -Film, music, and contemporary media -Historical references	-Changes in adjective meaning based on position -Special ordinal numbers ***e.g.: undécimo, vigésimo***
Clarifying Meaning in Speech and Writing -Learners can paraphrase or reformulate ideas to ensure clarity in formal or academic exchanges. -Learners can adjust their language register depending on audience, purpose, or medium.	**Contemporary Life** -Economics and financial literacy -Employment and the workplace -Professional life -Education and lifelong learning -Scientific and technological advances in everyday life -Health and wellness	-Nouns with gender-based meaning differences **(el/ la capital)** -Paraphrasing and reformulation expressions **(es decir, o sea, mejor dicho, dicho de otro modo, en otras palabras)** -Formal connectors for clarification and precision **(por lo tanto, por consiguiente, sin embargo, no obstante, asimismo)**

Interpreting and Comparing Cultural Perspectives -Learners can compare cultural practices, products, and multiple perspectives across Spanish-speaking communities. -Learners can synthesize information from authentic sources to support interpretations and conclusions. -Learners can discuss cultural similarities and differences using appropriate academic language.	**Families and Communities** -Family structures -Interpersonal relationships -Community organizations and local initiatives -Volunteerism and civic engagement -Cultural traditions -Leadership and citizenship	Advanced discourse markers for comparison and synthesis **(por un lado…, en cambio…, cabe destacar…, desde esta perspectiva…)**

RESOURCES

How 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
Scan the code to learn how to request a special modification for a student, or **click here**.

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

Scores vs. Percentiles
Scan the code to read about the difference between **individual scores and national results**.

Student Report Cards
Scan the code to take a look at a sample **student report card** and find out what it means.

Prizes and Certificates
Scan the code to learn more about NSE about **medals and certificates**.

Teacher & Student Awards
Scan the code to learn more about **scholarship 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.

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Live Chat Available
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