



Study Spanish Anywhere

Guatemalan Spanish Essential Nouns

FOR REAL-LIFE CONVERSATIONS



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Introduction

Words matter.

Especially nouns.

They are the people, places, objects, and ideas that shape everyday conversation. Before mastering idioms or complex expressions, you need to understand the vocabulary that appears constantly in real life.

But here's the truth: Spanish is not the same everywhere.

I learned this many times — sometimes in funny and unexpected ways.

Once, a student proudly told me, "Voy en coche," and I jokingly replied, "Are you going in a pig?" In Guatemala, coche means pig. What they meant was carro — car. Same language, different meanings.

Another time, while visiting Colombia, I told a friend, "Quiero un chévere," thinking I was asking for a hot dog. He looked at me completely confused. In Colombia, chévere means cool. In Guatemala, chévere refers to a hot dog.

And then there was the moment when a student told me, "Mi casero está de viaje." I laughed because in some contexts, casero could sound like "lover." He quickly clarified, "No, no, Pilar — I don't have a lover. I mean the landlord." Language can be playful... and dangerous.



These moments remind me that vocabulary is not just about translation. It's about context.

The goal of this book is simple:

To help English speakers understand Guatemalan Spanish as it is truly spoken — and to feel confident using it in real life.

Whether you are traveling to Guatemala, working with Guatemalans, have a Guatemalan partner, or simply want a deeper cultural immersion, understanding these nouns will bring you closer to authentic connection.

The words in this book are among the most commonly used in everyday Guatemalan Spanish. However, language can vary from region to region. I am from Quetzaltenango (Xela), and this guide reflects my experience as a Quetzalteca.

Some expressions — especially those considered vulgar — are not part of my personal daily speech (unless I'm extremely upset, which is rare). But I hear them constantly: on the street, on buses, from neighbors, on television, and across social media.

Understanding them can prevent uncomfortable situations — and help you integrate more naturally into conversations.

This book is also inspired by my husband. Almost every day, I say something in Spanish and he pauses: “What does that mean again?” Those small moments slow down communication — even between people who love each other.

My hope is that this guide not only strengthens your Spanish, but also strengthens your relationships.

Because language is not just about speaking correctly. It’s about belonging.

– Pilar

Welcome to Guatemalan Spanish.

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This book marks the beginning of the Guatemalan Spanish Collection – a series designed to help learners connect with real, everyday language in Guatemala.




How to Use This Book


In this ebook you will find words such as money, hit, beating, or period that have many synonyms in Guatemala. Some of them are vulgar or very informal, while others are more common and acceptable in everyday conversation.


The purpose of including all these synonyms is not necessarily for you to use them, but to help you recognize and understand them when you hear them in real conversations.


Many words that are considered vulgar are not part of my daily vocabulary, but I understand them easily. This allows me to follow conversations and respond naturally.

To help you navigate the vocabulary, you will see different markers:

 **Blue star:** Common and appropriate words that you can comfortably use in daily life.

 **Gray mark:** Informal words that you may choose to use depending on the context.

 **Red mark:** Words that are considered vulgar. It's useful to understand them, but you should only use them if you have enough trust with your friends and if you hear them used in that environment.

Feel free to practice and incorporate the  blue-star words into your everyday Spanish.



1. Agua - Usos

1.1 Aguas

Pronunciation: A-gwas

Español neutro: **Gaseosa / soda**

Inglés: Soda / soft drink



In Guatemala, using “agua” to mean soda or soft drink is very common in everyday speech. If someone wants real water, they usually say “agua pura.”

Situación 1: Estás en una tienda y dices:

- **Por favor, ¿me da un agua?**

El vendedor pregunta:
¿De qué sabor?

Situación 2:

Organizando una comida con amigos dices: - **Yo invito las pizzas y tú pagas las aguas.**

Situación 3: Te invitan a una fiesta y llevas Coca-Cola. Al llegar dices: - **Yo traje las aguas, ¿quién quiere?**

Situation 1: You're at a small store and say:

- **Can I get a soda, please?**

The seller asks: What flavor would you like?

Situation 2: You're organizing a meal with friends and say: - **I'll pay for the pizzas and you cover the sodas.**

Situation 3: You're invited to a party and bring Coca-Cola. When you arrive, you say: - **I brought the drinks — who wants one?**



2.2 Alboroto

Pronunciation: al-bo-RO-to

Español neutro:

Ruido / escándalo

Inglés: Noise / commotion / fuss



“Alboroto” is very common in daily life and everyday Guatemalan speech to describe noise, chaos, or exaggerated reactions.

Situación 1: Estás en tu casa y escuchas mucho ruido afuera y dices:
- **¿Qué es ese alboroto en la calle?**

Situación 2: Hay niños jugando y gritando en el patio y alguien dice:
- **Ya paren el alboroto.**

Situación 3: Alguien reacciona exageradamente por algo pequeño y dices:
- **No hagás tanto alboroto, no es para tanto.**

Situation 1: You're at home and hear a lot of noise outside and say:
- **What's all that commotion in the street?**

Situation 2: Kids are playing and shouting in the yard and someone says:
- **Stop all that noise.**

Situation 3: Someone overreacts to something small and you say:
- **Don't make such a big fuss, it's not a big deal.**



4. Atol

Pronunciation: a-TOL

Español neutro:

Bebida espesa caliente tradicional



Inglés: Traditional thick hot corn-based drink

Atol is a deeply rooted traditional drink in Guatemala, commonly enjoyed at breakfast or during celebrations. It reflects the country's strong corn-based culinary heritage.

Situación 1: Es una mañana fría y alguien dice:

- **Vamos por un atol.**

Situación 2: Estás en una feria y preguntas:
- **¿Qué atoles tiene hoy?**

Situación 3: Visitas a tu abuelita y te dice:

- **¿Querés atol de elote o de arroz?**

Situation 1: It's a cold morning and someone says:

- **Let's get an atol.**

Situation 2: You're at a fair and ask:
- **What kinds of atol do you have today?**

Situation 3: You visit your grandmother and she says:

- **Would you like corn atol or rice atol?**