Following this course will help you understand, speak and read most of the Spanish you are likely to need on holiday or on business trips. The course is based on recordings made in Spain of ordinary Spanish people in everyday situations. Step by step you will learn first to understand what they are saying and then to speak in similar situations yourself.

Before producing the course we talked to literally hundreds of people about why and how they learn languages. We know how important it is for learning to be enjoyable – and for it to be useable as soon as possible. Again and again people told us that there was not much point in knowing all the grammar if you were unable to ask for a cup of coffee! In this course the only explanations of grammar will be the ones that actually help you to understand and use the language.

General hints to help you use the course

• Have confidence in us! Real language is complex and you will find certain things in every unit which are not explained in detail. Don’t worry about this. We will build up your knowledge slowly, selecting only what is most important to know at each stage.
• Try to study regularly, but in short periods. 20–30 minutes each day is usually better than 3½ hours once a week.
• To help you learn to speak, say the words and phrases out loud whenever possible.
• If you don’t understand something, leave it for a while. Learning a language is a bit like doing a jigsaw or a crossword: there are many ways to tackle it and it all falls into place eventually.
• Don’t be afraid to write in the book and add your own notes.
• Do revise frequently. (There are revision sections after every five units.) It helps to get somebody to test you – and they don’t need to know Spanish.
• If you can possibly learn with somebody else, you will be able to help each other and practise the language together.
• Learning Spanish may take more time than you thought. Just be patient and above all don’t get angry with yourself.

Suggested study pattern

Each unit of the course consists of approximately fourteen pages in the book and ten minutes of recordings. The first page of each unit will tell you what you are going to learn and suggest the best method of going about it. As you progress with the course you may find that you evolve a method of study which suits you better – that’s fine, but we suggest you keep to our pattern at least for the first two or three units or you may find you are not taking full advantage of all the possibilities offered by the material.

The book contains step-by-step instructions for working through the course: when to use the book on its own, when to use the recording on its own, when to use them both together, and how to use them. On the recording the presenter will guide you through the various sections. Here is an outline of the study pattern proposed.

Listen to the dialogues, first without stopping, and get a feel for the task ahead. Then go over each one bit by bit in conjunction with the vocabulary and the notes. You should get into the habit of playing the recordings repeatedly to give yourself time to think, to listen to sentences a number of times, and repeat them after the speakers. Don’t leave a dialogue until you are confident that you have at least understood it.

(Symbol used in the notes are explained on p. 6.)
**Key words and phrases**

Study this list of the most important words and phrases from the dialogues. If possible, try to learn them by heart. They will be practised in the rest of the unit.

**Practise what you have learned**

This section contains a selection of exercises which focus your attention on the most important language in the unit. To do them you will need to work closely with the book and the recording—sometimes you are asked to write an exercise and then check the answers on the recording; other times to listen first and then fill in the answers in the book. Again, go back over the phrases as many times as necessary and use the pause control to give yourself time to think and to answer questions.

**Grammar**

At this stage in a unit things should begin to fall into place and you are ready for the grammar section. If you really don’t like grammar, you will still learn a lot without studying this part, but most people quite enjoy finding out how the language they are using actually works and how it is put together. In each unit we have selected just one or two important grammar points.

**Read and understand and Did you know?**

In these sections you will be encouraged to read the kind of signs, menus, brochures and so on you may come across in Spain, and you will be given some practical background information on Spanish customs and culture.

**Your turn to speak**

Finally back to the recording for some practice in speaking the main words and phrases which you have already heard and had explained. The book only gives you an outline of the exercises, so you are just listening to the tape and responding. Usually you will be asked to take part in a conversation where you hear a question or statement in Spanish, followed by a suggestion in English as to how you might reply. You then give your reply in Spanish and listen to see if you were right. You will probably have to go over these spoken exercises a few times before you get them absolutely correct.

**Answers**

The answers to all the exercises (except those given on the recording) can be found on the last page of each unit.

If you haven’t learned languages using a recording before, just spend five minutes on Unit 1 getting used to the mechanics: practise using the pause and repeat-play controls.

Don’t be shy – take every opportunity you can to speak Spanish to Spanish people and to listen to real Spanish. Try listening to Spanish broadcasts on the radio or tuning in to the excellent BBC radio and television programmes for learners.

¡Suerte!

**At the back of the book**

At the back of the book there is a reference section which contains:

- p.217 The written part of the revision sections which occur after every fifth unit on the recording.
- p.221 A short grammar summary with definitions of grammatical terms (noun, adjective, etc.). The section also covers the main rules of Spanish grammar for those who wish to study them in greater detail than the main part of the course provides.
- p.227 A Spanish–English vocabulary list containing all the words in the course.
- p.237 A brief index to enable you to look things up in the book.