
McVey Gill, Mary, and Brenda Wegmann.
***Streetwise Spanish: Speak and Understand
Everyday Spanish.***

New York: McGraw-Hill, 2006. ISBN: 0-07-146087-X (book and CD set).

This revised edition of *Streetwise Spanish* includes a 75-minute, 30-segment CD featuring native speakers from fifteen different Spanish-speaking countries. It

also introduces a useful section titled *Signature Words and Their Usage*, which explains popular terms from Latin America and Spain.

For those of you unfamiliar with Gill and Wegmann's popular collection of slang and colloquial expressions, *Streetwise Spanish* presents a wide selection of words and phrases organized by theme (weather, love, anger) and situation (asking for information, getting someone's attention). The text is divided into fifteen chapters, each of which includes the same basic ingredients: two brief dialogues (presented in Spanish with an English translation), a discussion of the key phrases used in the dialogues, a list of chapter vocabulary, two or three *chistes* (jokes), and review exercises. Humorous drawings and cartoons add interest and also serve to illustrate usage. Many chapters include an informative essay on *Vocabulary and Culture*.

For example, *Chapter 12: Cuente usted conmigo*, subtitled "Giving Encouragement, Advice, and Emotional Support, Expressing Sympathy," begins with two dialogues between Costa Rican students Nidia and Juan Antonio at a *soda*. In the first dialogue, Nidia offers Juan Antonio her support after learning that his girlfriend has left him; in the second, Juan Antonio comforts Nidia when she tells him about a death in her family. The dialogues are presented in Spanish on one page and in English on the facing page, and each is followed by a section entitled *¡Ojo!* - a description of the key expressions (for example, *tico*, *soda*, *¿diay?*), which includes an explanation of their possible origins. In some cases, the text includes cognate expressions from different countries (for example, *el carro* is used in the second dialogue, and the text explains that *el auto* and *el coche* are used in many other countries, while Cubans normally say *la máquina*). *Vocabulario del capítulo* follows. Chapter 12 includes an essay on *Vocabulary and Culture* relating to superlatives, diminutives, and augmentatives and explains not only the commonly taught suffixes *-ísimo/a* and *-ito/a*, but also *-ón/-ona*, *-ote/ota*, *-acho/-acha*, and the prefixes *re-*, *que-*, and *te-*. The chapter concludes with several review exercises and two *chistes*.

At the end of this edition, the authors have added an appendix, *Signature Words and Their Usage*, in which they describe several typical expressions from Spain and each of the nineteen American countries where Spanish is spoken. Colombian terms, for example, include *el cachifo(a)* (a young person), *el, la cuadro* (boyfriend, girlfriend), and *la verraquera* (a wonderful or marvelous thing). The text also includes a Spanish-English glossary and an answer key for all of the exercises and activities in the text.

The CD accompanying this new edition is the real draw, in my opinion. It offers students recordings of the thirty dialogues (two per chapter) made by native speakers from fifteen different countries. Each dialogue is introduced in English and is followed by a short comprehension review/quiz. The students are encouraged to note and practice the different accents.

Unlike many collections of Spanish slang, *Streetwise Spanish* has always stood out for its careful explanation of the terms presented, the variety of regions represented (twenty countries, in addition to the Hispanic community in the United States), and the care with which it contextualizes colloquialisms. Some dialogues feature speakers from one country, while in others speakers from different coun-

tries meet and experience confusion or embarrassment when they use words that have different meanings in different locales (for example, the text demonstrates the various uses of *pendejo* and *bolas*). The text doesn't avoid vulgar terms, but the dialogues, the ¡Ojo! sections, and the cultural essays carefully describe the regional differences between these terms as well as their register, and the *chistes* and the cartoons also help students understand the appropriate context for each expression. The addition of the CD is a terrific bonus: students can now hear colloquialisms (for example, *hijole*) pronounced by a native speaker.

Students and instructors alike will enjoy *Streetwise Spanish*. The thematic organization of the chapters, the variety of regions represented, and now the native recordings of the dialogues can be used in and out of the classroom to enhance students' ability to communicate effectively in a wide range of situations and settings. It would be especially useful for intermediate and advanced students who interact with native speakers from many different areas: the text offers them a glossary of terms, detailed descriptions of regional variations and registers, and possible pitfalls. It is less useful for students who live, work, or will study in less diverse situations, since it is difficult to tease out specifically Spanish, Mexican, or Argentine vocabulary.

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Publisher's Response

My thanks to Professor Paul for her detailed review of *Streetwise Spanish*. She does a wonderful job of highlighting the content and approach of this text on everyday colloquial Spanish. Professor Paul also mentions the benefits of the accompanying audio recording; not only does the CD bring the book's dialogues to life, it features authentic voices from the 15 Spanish-speaking countries featured in the book. As the reviewer indicates, this title is most appropriate for intermediate and advanced students, who will benefit from material that highlights, indeed celebrates, the diversity of Spanish spoken across the Hispanic world today.

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