

# Spanish for Little Learners

Teaching Tips and Sample Pre-K Lessons  
For Children Ages 2-5

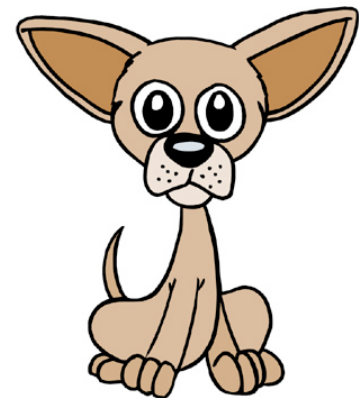


[catherine@catherinefortin.org](mailto:catherine@catherinefortin.org)

Foreign Language House LLC - ForeignLanguageHouse.com  
Copyright 2012  
Images by clipart.com; photos by Foreign Language House

# Table of Contents

Introduction . . . . .	3
Rationale for Early Language Learning . . . . .	3
The Preschool Learner . . . . .	9
Materials and Music . . . . .	9
Children's Books . . . . .	12
Spanish-Speaking Puppets . . . . .	14
Target Language: Prop as Prompt . . . . .	15
Total Physical Response (TPR) . . . . .	15
Behavior Management with a Smile . . . . .	17
Circle Time Lesson Structure . . . . .	18
Sample Lessons	
Fall . . . . .	20
Winter . . . . .	29
Spring . . . . .	33



***Welcome to the wonderful world of teaching Spanish to young children!*** It's fun, creative, crazy, silly, exhausting and rewarding. I began offering preschool Spanish classes to the two and three-year-old set during a three year hiatus from teaching older elementary and younger middle school Spanish students. Wow did these tots teach me a thing or two!

I was a veteran teacher, but teaching those thirty-minute pre-school classes was one of the biggest teaching challenges I had ever come across. I quickly consulted early childhood development textbooks, I called Diane (the goddess of all things Pre-school) daily, and I quickly learned how to do that *PreK Thing*. And now we want to give you some secret preschool ingredients and some life saving teaching tips for a new or an enhanced Pre School Spanish program.

I hope that this ebook will help you make second-language learning an enjoyable experience for children, whether you are a preschool teacher, a Spanish teacher, or a parent. Get ready to play, sing, dance, and act as you make Spanish come alive for the littlest learners. May it be a joyful journey. ¡*Buen Viaje!*

And *mil gracias* to my assistant and friend Pepi Plua for helping to edit after my late nights of writing.

Catherine Fortin  
Spanish Teacher and Co-Creator of Foreign Language House LLC

## **The Preschool Learner**

***Forget the textbooks, worksheets, and verb conjugations of your high school days!*** When working with young children, language must be oral, active, concrete, and meaningful. As a *general* rule of thumb, expect one minute of attention span for each year of a child's age. Three and four year olds can usually attend to an activity for a little longer, perhaps 8-10 minutes if there is adult interaction. A teacher must change activities frequently and constantly engage learners in creative and exciting ways.

Children ages 2-6 are at Jean Piaget's **pre-operational** stage of cognitive development. These learners require hands-on activities and imaginative play. They are egocentric and pre-logical. They possess "magical" thinking and can focus on a single, concrete characteristic. The pre-operational stage is the period in which children learn how to use language. *What an awesome time to introduce Spanish!*

Allow children to move and to touch. Support their cognitive development by providing opportunities to practice skills such as sorting, classifying, recognizing patterns, and predicting. Role-play, movement, crafts, props, pictures, and toys are integral to a quality program.

# Materials: The Top Baker's Dozen

Stock your preschool Spanish "toolbox" with fun, hands-on materials and toys. Here are the Top Thirteen:

1. **Magic Hat, Flags, Serape:** Wear a prop that causes YOU to speak only Spanish! This will help to keep you in the target language and create a fun immersion environment.
2. **Puppets:** Use a friendly cast of lovable friends to encourage Spanish communication and to tie into various themes. Culturally and geographically correct animals are a hit and they teach culture and geography in the target language.
3. **Parachute:** Give puppet friends a ride while reinforcing commands such as up/down/around/left/right/fast/slow. Try hiding puppets, objects, and children underneath it. The "big reveal" is tons of fun.
4. **Bubbles:** Chase them, catch them, count them, pop them!
5. **Bean Bags:** Toss and count, put them on your head/hand/tummy/etc., identify colors, toss them onto pictures, and more.
6. **Giant Foam Dice:** Roll the giant dice and practice counting. This is fun and effective to do with the beanbags. One child rolls the dice, the class counts the dots, and then counts again while tossing beanbags the designated number of times.
7. **Magical Glitter Wand:** Use it for identifying pictures, objects, or items on a calendar. Children love to have a turn to hold it!
8. **Magic Bag or Box:** Hide a key visual or prop in a bag or box before revealing it to the children. This creates excitement, surprise, and focused attention!
9. **Inflatable Globe:** It's never too early to introduce children to geography and the world around them. Use the ball for play, but refer to places whenever the opportunity arises. And speaking of balls, bring in as many sensory objects as possible such as squishy or Koosh balls.
10. **Musical Instruments:** Allow the children to make music while marching, singing, counting, or dancing.
11. **Felt Board:** This is a versatile tool for storytelling, and one that will never go out of style! Sure, there are high-tech alternatives, but the tactile quality of felt is one that children will always love. Want to make your own? Glue felt to a cookie sheet. You can then use the reverse side as a magnet board!
12. **Toys:** Blocks, action figures, toy trains, Mr. Potato Head, and play dough are just a few examples of beloved toys that are effective and important for play-based language learning! Garage sales or your own children's toy boxes are wonderful sources for teaching materials.

*Plus One More . . . . .*

13. **iPod Touch, iPad, Portable Speakers:** Bringing music into the classroom has never been easier thanks to the digital age and the dollar download from iTunes. Buy just what you need, arrange your playlist for the day, and *you've got a musical class set up!* You can also create a class à la Sesame Street, with short, authentic video clips interspersed throughout the lesson to support the theme or redirect wiggly kids.

# Fall Lessons

The following lesson plans are the actual lessons that Diane used for one year of mom-tot French classes for ages 1-4. Other years we taught different themes (apples, dinosaurs, washing hands/health, community helpers, planting, Mexico, The Chihuahua Desert of Mexico) used different finger plays, crafts, and games. Hopefully the following examples will spark ideas as you develop lessons of your own!

## **Fall Week 1: Meet Chico & Learn Colors**

- Introduce parents to the importance of early language acquisition
- Introduce children to my shy chihuahua stuffed animal Chico--how to get him to dance (by speaking Spanish), class rules, my magic, Spanish-only prop
- Buenos Días Mis Amigos
- Rules Rhyme
- Me llamo/greet Chico
- Parachute ride for Chico
- TPR commands: camina, salta, indica, baila, corre
- Colors on parachute, flash cards, clothes
- Sing a colors song while identifying colors with a magic wand (Check out Sing *Sing, Dance, Laugh, and Eat Tacos: Los Colores*. [www.singdancelaugh.com](http://www.singdancelaugh.com))
- Play with blocks. Build towers, identify colors, count to 3 and knock down.  
*Uno, dos, tres . . . ¡BUM!*
- Say goodbye to Chico
- Song: Adiós mis amigos.
- Hand stamps



## **Fall Week 2: Chico, Los Colores, ¿Cómo estás? & El Pato**

- *Buenos días mis amigos* song
- Rules Rhyme
- Me llamo/greet Chico
- Teach *¿cómo estás?* faces - get happy stamp on hand
- *Buenos días \_\_\_\_\_ cómo estás?* song to each child, children respond by holding up mask
- Pass around colored beanbags, identify colors
- Colors flash cards, song

