

Dear Spanish Basic Language Student,

For many of you the format of the Spanish 1, 2 and 3 classes is different from what you have had in the past. These classes are computer-enhanced classes, meaning that in addition to the 2 days you spend in class, you will also spend the equivalent of 2 classes working on computer activities. The computer activities prepare you for the activities that you will engage in during the class periods. Each week, beginning with the third week of classes, you will be responsible for completing a series of activities in ANGEL, Penn State's course management system. These activities include grammar and vocabulary presentations, practice with these concepts (both multiple choice/selection activities and activities in which you supply the correct answer.) In addition to these weekly activities, there are also weekly pronunciation activities, listening comprehension activities and reading comprehension activities. (In almost all activities, you have more than one opportunity to get the item correct. There is more information on the number of attempts in the course policies.) These activities are completed the week before you use them in class. Each class has a very short "reminder" of what you have seen the week before in ANGEL, then a short listening activity to accustom you to the sounds of the vocabulary and structures. The remainder of the class is devoted to speaking activities.

There are several reasons why the courses are set up in this way. First, this allows you to work at your own pace. You may take as long as you like to study the material and make sure you understand it. By doing the work ahead, you also have time to ask your professor for clarification (or visit the free tutoring center) before coming to class. On the other hand, if you have understood the material quickly or have been exposed to it before, you do not need to sit through an explanation of something you already understand. Second, there is a great deal of variety in activities on ANGEL, providing ample opportunities for those whose learning styles differ, to have exposure to different activities. Third, since this allows you to prepare ahead, during class you will use the vocabulary and structures you have studied on ANGEL, thus maximizing the amount of time you have to speak and use what you have learned. With this structure, you will have double the opportunity to speak in class than you did when all of the preparatory activities were done in class under the old four day/week schedule. We have found that students perform as well with this structure as they did under the four day/week format.

However, if you do not feel that this format suits your learning style, the department also offers more traditional courses that cover the material in Spanish 1, 2, and 3, but in a two semester sequence. Each course is six credits and has class five days/week. These are Spanish 10 in the fall, which covers Spanish 1 and the first half of Spanish 2, and Spanish 20 in the spring, which covers the second half of Spanish 2 and Spanish 3. These are taught without computer activities. Because these courses are considered intensive, they do not follow the placement policy. (You may begin at a lower level than you are required to for Spanish 1, 2, and 3.) Continuing education and summer course are also taught in the more traditional way.

Good luck with your semester.

Sincerely,

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