

YOUR FREE READER'S COMPANION

The Boricua Starter Pack

A companion to Learn Puerto Rican Spanish · by Yolanda Rivera

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By Yolanda Rivera · bookcompanion.co

What's in this pack

Thank you for picking up Learn Puerto Rican Spanish. This little pack is my gift to you — five printable cards that pull the most useful pages together so you can carry the island in your pocket and start speaking right away.

Inside you'll find:

1. Your pronunciation card — the sound-it-out method plus the boricua sounds that trip people up.
2. The boricua slang cheat sheet — the words you'll actually hear, ready to use.
3. The everyday-phrases survival card — greetings, manners, and getting by.
4. At the colmado & ordering food — order like a local, not a tourist.
5. Your 7-day speak-from-day-one plan — a gentle week to get your mouth moving.

Print the cards you like, fold the small ones to wallet size, and keep them near you. Everything here comes straight from the book — real Puerto Rican words, authentic boricua expressions, everyday phrases, and a full Puerto Rican pronunciation guide. No app, no audio, no internet needed. Just you and a few minutes a day.

One honest reminder: the sound-it-out spellings are gentle approximations, made to get an English speaker close. The more you say them out loud, the closer you'll land.

1. Your Puerto Rican pronunciation card

Every Spanish word in the book is respelled in English-style syllables. You read the respelling out loud as if it were English, and you land very close. CAPITAL LETTERS mark the stressed syllable — the one you say a little louder and longer. Hitting the capitals is what suddenly makes a beginner sound clear.

The vowels never change

Respelling	Say it like
ah	the a in father
eh	the e in bed
ee	the ee in see
oh	the o in go
oo	the oo in boot

Four boricua sounds to listen for

The trait	What happens	You'll hear
The disappearing "s"	an s at the end of a syllable softens to a light h, or drops	está » eh-TAH · las cosas » lah KOH-sah
The throaty "rr"	the rolled rr is said far back, like a raspy h	carro » KAH-ho · Ramón starts with that h
"r" turning into "l"	at the end of a syllable, r drifts toward l	amor » ah-MOL · comer » koh-MEL
"para" clipped to "pa"	the word para is shortened in relaxed speech	para acá » pa-KAH · pa'lante » forward

Good news for English speakers: there is no Spain-style "th" lisp. The letters c (before e/i) and z are just a plain s. gracias » GRAH-syahs.

2. The boricua slang cheat sheet

The words that make you sound like you actually know the island. Fold this one to wallet size.

Word	Say it	It means
¡Wepa!	WEH-pah	Woo-hoo! Yeah! (joy or approval)
chévere	CHEH-beh-reh	Cool, great, awesome
brutal	broo-TAHL	Amazing, incredible (not "cruel")
nítido	NEE-tee-doh	Perfect, all good
janguear	hahn-geh-AHR	To hang out, go have fun
pana	PAH-nah	Close friend, buddy
corillo	koh-REE-yoh	Your group of friends, the crew
boricua	boh-REE-kwah	A Puerto Rican (from Taíno Borikén)
¿Qué es la que hay?	keh ehs lah keh AI	What's up?
¡Ay, bendito!	AI ben-DEE-toh	Oh, poor thing! / Oh my!
dale	DAH-leh	Go ahead; okay; let's do it
chavos	CHAH-bohs	Money
bregar	breh-GAHR	To deal with, handle something
echar pa'lante	eh-CHAR pah-LAHN-teh	To push forward, persevere
acho / chacho	AH-choh / CHAH-choh	"Man...", "geez..." (filler)
gufear	goo-feh-AHR	To joke around, goof off
vacilón	bah-see-LOHN	A fun time, a blast
¿Ta' to'?	tah toh	Everything good? / We good?

3. The everyday-phrases survival card

The lines that carry you through a real day. Warm, polite, and unmistakably boricua.

Say this	Sound it out	Meaning
¡Hola! ¿Cómo estás?	OH-lah, KOH-moh ehs-TAHS	Hi! How are you?
Buenos días.	BWEH-nohs DEE-ahs	Good morning.
Todo bien, gracias a Dios.	TOH-doh byen, GRAH-syahs ah dyohs	All good, thank God.
Por favor.	pohr fah-BOHR	Please.
Muchas gracias.	MOO-chahs GRAH-syahs	Thank you very much.
De nada.	deh NAH-dah	You're welcome.
Con permiso.	kohn per-MEE-soh	Excuse me (to pass by).
¿Cómo te llamas?	KOH-moh teh YAH-mahs	What's your name?
Mucho gusto.	MOO-choh GOOS-toh	Nice to meet you.
Estoy aprendiendo español.	ehs-TOY ah-pren-DYEN-doh ehs-pah-NYOHL	I'm learning Spanish.
No entiendo.	noh en-TYEN-doh	I don't understand.
¿Puede repetir, por favor?	PWEH-deh reh-peh-TEER, pohr fah-BOHR	Can you repeat that, please?
¿Dónde queda el baño?	DOHN-deh KEH-dah el BAH-nyoh	Where is the bathroom?
Nos vemos, ¡cuídate!	nohs BEH-mohs, KWEE-dah-teh	See you, take care!

4. At the colmado & ordering food

The colmado is the corner store, the heart of the neighborhood. Here's how to order like a local — with the real PR words you won't find in a generic textbook.

Getting what you need

Say this	Sound it out	Meaning
¿Cuánto cuesta?	KWAHN-toh KWEHS-tah	How much is it?
Dame una libra de café, por favor.	DAH-meh OO-nah LEE-brah deh kah-FEH, pohr fah-BOHR	Give me a pound of coffee, please.
¿Me da una bolsa?	meh dah OO-nah BOHL-sah	Can I have a bag?
Quiero un café con leche.	KYEH-roh oon kah-FEH kohn LEH-cheh	I'd like a coffee with milk.
La cuenta, por favor.	lah KWEN-tah, pohr fah-BOHR	The check, please.
Está riquísimo.	ehs-TAH ree-KEE-see-moh	It's delicious.

Boricua words on the menu & shelf

Word	Sound it out	It's the PR word for
la china	lah CHEE-nah	orange (not naranja)
el guineo	ehl gee-NEH-oh	banana (not plátano)
el mofongo	ehl moh-FOHN-goh	mashed fried plantain dish
los tostones	lohs tohs-TOH-nehs	fried flattened plantains
el arroz con gandules	ehl ah-RROHS kohn gahn-DOO-lehs	rice with pigeon peas
el lechón	ehl leh-CHOHN	roast pork
la malta	lah MAHL-tah	sweet malt soda (a PR favorite)
el chinchorro	cheen-CHOH-rroh	a roadside food shack

5. Your 7-day speak-from-day-one plan

A few minutes a day beats one long session. Say everything out loud — whisper it in the car if you have to. Hit the capital letters.

Day 1 — Say hello like a boricua

Learn ¡Hola! ¿Cómo estás?, Buenas, and ¿Qué es la que hay? Greet one real person (or your mirror) before the day ends.

Day 2 — Be polite

Master por favor, muchas gracias, de nada, con permiso, mucho gusto. Use three of them out loud today.

Day 3 — Warm up your mouth

Practice the four boricua sounds from Card 1: carro » KAH-ho, amor » ah-MOL, está » eh-TAH, para » pa. Repeat each five times.

Day 4 — Ten everyday words

Learn ten PR words: guagua, carro, colmado, china, guineo, chavos, mahones, zafacón, playa, café. Point at things and name them.

Day 5 — Order something

Run the colmado card. Out loud: Quiero un café con leche and ¿Cuánto cuesta? Then treat yourself to a real café.

Day 6 — Add flavor

Drop in five slang words naturally: chévere, brutal, pana, ¡Wepa!, dale. React to good news with ¡Wepa!

Day 7 — Have a tiny conversation

String it together: greet, say your name, say Estoy aprendiendo español, order something, and close with Nos vemos, ¡cuídate! You just spoke Puerto Rican Spanish.

Keep going. Open the book to the vocabulary themes and pick a new set each week. Say it out loud, listen to the music of real speakers, and the accent will start to feel like your own. ¡Échale pa'lante!

— Yolanda