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Spanish Pen Pals Made Easy

A Fun Way to Write Spanish and Make a New Friend



Sinead Lelev and
Belén de Vicente Fisher

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**A Fun Way to Write Spanish and
Make a New Friend**

Sinéad Leleu and Belén de Vicente Fisher

Dedication

For Chris Fisher, thanking you for all your help and support. BVF

We hope you and your pupils enjoy corresponding with your Spanish pen pals using this book. Brilliant Publications publishes many other books for teaching modern foreign languages. To find out more details on any of the titles listed below, please log onto our website:
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Introduction

In this era of technology, we MFL teachers are spoilt with an excellent array of resource material. Interactive CD-Roms, DVDs, Internet sites ... you name it, we use them all. The main aim of all this is that, one day, our pupils will be able to communicate with other MFL speakers through our chosen language. In my own classes, this 'one day' is now. This we do through pen pal correspondence.

My experience has shown me that, despite regularly introducing a variety of resources into my classes, rarely a class begins without a pupil asking 'Have our letters arrived yet?' 'No, todavía, no' is met with disappointment whereas 'Sí' is met with great excitement and delight. My pupils are unwaveringly eager to reply. This may seem like a daunting task to the less confident or the time-strapped teacher but ...

For the teacher, *Spanish Pen Pals Made Easy*:

- ◆ Does not require fluency
- ◆ Is time-saving – little or no preparation is required
- ◆ Links with the KS2 Framework for language teaching
- ◆ Has inherent cross-curricular links to geography, art and ICT
- ◆ Supplements, consolidates and revises course work.

For the pupil, *Spanish Pen Pals Made Easy*:

- ◆ Is easy to follow. The method used is gap-filling as opposed to giving pupils the daunting task of beginning with a blank page
- ◆ Is realistic. The pupil realizes that Spanish can be used for real-life communication and not just in an artificial situation
- ◆ Instils confidence. They can communicate effectively at a basic level
- ◆ Helps foster positive attitudes towards foreign language learning
- ◆ Facilitates intercultural understanding. The pupil can learn about Spanish culture through a Spanish peer
- ◆ ... and, of course, it is fun and a wonderful way to make a new friend. (I should know as I have had the same two pen pals for over 25 years!)

Tips for the teacher

Where to find pen pals

1. There are many websites to help you to find a Spanish-speaking class to correspond with, for example:
 - ◆ www.epals.com
 - ◆ www.globalgateway.org
 - ◆ www.etwinning.net
 - ◆ www.ipf.net.au (small fee)

If you have the option of choosing a country, do not forget other countries where you can find Spanish-speaking schools such as Mexico, Peru, Chile and Argentina.

2. If your town is twinned with a Spanish town, you could contact their 'Colegio de Educación Primaria' (ages 6–12) or 'Colegio de Educación Secundaria' (ages 12–18).

Checklist for you and your Spanish-speaking counterpart

1. Confirm with your Spanish-speaking counterpart that your pupils will write in Spanish and decide whether the replies will be in English or Spanish. (They may like to know that *Spanish Pen Pals Made Easy* can be purchased from Amazon.)
2. Decide which class will write first.
3. Decide how you are going to pair the pupils. Either one of the teachers decides or the pupils in the class that receives the first letters decide. It is a good idea to make a note of the pairs immediately as some pupils will not remember their pen pal's name. Unless you find a class with the exact same number of pupils, some pupils will have to write two letters.
4. Discuss the expected frequency of your letters. This depends on the school calendar, workload and enthusiasm. Be careful to decide on realistic deadlines. It is a good idea to take one term at a time.
5. Agree on the themes for the term ahead. Take into consideration seasonal events such as Christmas, Hallowe'en and local festivals.

Before pupils begin

1. Before pupils begin to write a letter, it is paramount to have covered the relevant language orally. Remember: **hear it, say it, see it, write it.**
2. Introduce letter writing with a sample letter written on the board, chart or overhead projector. You could use the letter for Unit 1, 'Déjame presentarme', on page 10; this letter can also be downloaded from our website so you can display it on a whiteboard:
[www.brilliantpublications.co.uk/PAGE1042_sample letter.pdf](http://www.brilliantpublications.co.uk/PAGE1042_sample%20letter.pdf).

Highlight the five main parts of the letter:

- ◆ the heading, which includes the town and date
- ◆ the greeting
- ◆ the body of the letter
- ◆ the closing greeting
- ◆ the signature.

3. Before pupils begin their first letter, explain to them how to use *Spanish Pen Pals Made Easy*:
 - ◆ Point out that pupils must first fill in the blanks and circle where there is a choice.
 - ◆ Using imaginary details or those of a pupil in the class, go through the letter line by line. Complete and circle where necessary. See what pupils can come up with themselves before referring to the 'Vocabulario adicional' section.
 - ◆ Write out the entire letter on the board. Explain to pupils that they will need to write a draft into their Spanish workbooks.
 - ◆ Tell pupils that you will then correct their draft letters before they write their final letters.

Writing your first letter

1. Having explained how to use *Spanish Pen Pals Made Easy*, give each pupil the Spanish template letter for 'Déjame presentarme' (page 10). Depending on the class level and time, some teachers will prefer to only give certain sections of the unit. For example, if your class has a good level of Spanish, you may prefer not to hand out the English template. However, if unfinished letters are given as homework, it is advisable to give all four pages of the unit. As the templates and vocabulary are bilingual, parents/guardians will feel comfortable helping.
2. If you give out the English template, point out to your pupils that they are not always word-for-word translations. It is the ideas that are translated.
3. Once you have corrected the pupils' drafts, they should write their letters out neatly to send to their pen pals. Using personalized stationery can help to make their letters special. Allow the pupils to choose this for themselves.
4. If pupils wish to include enclosures such as postcards, photos, drawings etc, make sure that they are either stapled or stuck to the letter or that each pupil has their own individual envelope.

As you move on

1. As soon as you receive your first replies, get your pupils to stick their letters into their Spanish workbooks or put them into their Spanish folders.
2. *Spanish Pen Pals Made Easy* is flexible, so, excepting the first unit (Déjame presentarme), the units may be used in any order.