

38 Spanish false friends

Words that look like English and mean something else, with what to say instead. Latin American Spanish. Free to print and share in class.

embarazada

looks like **embarrassed**
means pregnant
say **me da pena, me da vergüenza**

excitado

looks like **excited**
means aroused, in most of Latin America
say **emocionado**

preservativo

looks like **preservative**
means condom
say **conservador (conservante in Spain)**

groserías

looks like **groceries**
means swear words, rude remarks
say **el súper, el mandado (Mexico), las compras**

introducir

looks like **introduce**
means to insert, to bring in
say **presentar (a person)**

molestar

looks like **molest**
means to bother, to annoy
say **acosar (to harass)**

actualmente

looks like **actually**
means currently, at the moment
say **en realidad, la verdad, de hecho**

aplicar

looks like **apply (for a job)**
means to apply a cream, a rule or a discount
say **solicitar, postularse**

carpeta

looks like **carpet**
means folder, binder
say **alfombra (tapete for a rug in Mexico)**

colegio

looks like **college**
means school, often a private one
say **universidad**

lectura

looks like **lecture**
means reading, a reading passage
say **conferencia, clase**

librería

looks like **library**
means bookshop
say **biblioteca**

compromiso

looks like **compromise**
means commitment, obligation, engagement (to marry)
say **llegar a un acuerdo, ceder**

sensible

looks like **sensible**
means sensitive
say **sensato, razonable**

decepcionado

looks like **deceived**
means disappointed
say **engañado**

simpático

looks like **sympathetic**
means nice, friendly, likeable
say **comprensivo**

pariente

looks like **parent**
means relative
say **padres (papás in Mexico)**

educado

looks like **educated**
means polite, well brought up
say **culto, con estudios**

sano

looks like **sane**
means healthy
say **cuerto**

soportar

looks like **support**
means to put up with, to stand
say **apoyar**

ropa

looks like **rope**
means clothes
say **cuerda, sogá, mecate (Mexico)**

éxito

looks like **exit**
means success
say **salida**

sopa

looks like **soap**
means soup
say **jabón**

largo

looks like **large**
means long
say **grande**

fábrica

looks like **fabric**
means factory
say **tela**

billón

looks like **billion**
means a million million (an English trillion)
say **mil millones**

tuna

looks like **tuna**
means prickly pear, a cactus fruit (Mexico)
say **atún**

dormitorio

looks like **dorm**
means bedroom
say **residencia estudiantil**

casualidad

looks like **casualty**
means coincidence, chance
say **victima, herido**

ganga

looks like **gang**
means bargain
say **pandilla**

realizar

looks like **realise**
means to carry out, to make happen
say **darse cuenta**

asistir

looks like **assist**
means to attend (asistir a)
say **ayudar**

atender

looks like **attend**
means to serve, to look after, to deal with
say **asistir a, ir a**

recordar

looks like **record**
means to remember, to remind
say **grabar**

discutir

looks like **discuss**
means to argue (and, more formally, to discuss)
say **hablar de, platicar (Mexico)**

pretender

looks like **pretend**
means to intend, to aim to
say **fingir, hacer como que**

resumir

looks like **resume**
means to summarise
say **retomar, reanudar**

advertir

looks like **advertise**
means to warn
say **anunciar, hacer publicidad**