

Spanish Sayings/Idioms

No hay dos sin tres

Literal: There is no two without three

Similar Saying: Everything happens in threes

Meaning: If something happens once, it could be a one-time thing. If it happens twice, it will most likely happen again.

Más vale maña que fuerza

Literal: Better skill than strength

Similar Saying: Brains over brawn

Meaning: Intelligence is better than physical strength

Más se consigue lamiendo que mordiendo

Literal: More is achieved by licking than by biting

Similar Saying: You catch more flies with honey than vinegar

Meaning: You can win people to your side more easily by gentle persuasion and flattery than by hostile confrontation.

Favor con favor se paga

Literal: Favor with favor, it pays

Similar Saying: You scratch my back and I'll scratch yours

Meaning: You do a favor for me and I'll do a favor for you; If you do something for me that I cannot do for myself, I will do something for you that you cannot do for yourself

El que tiene boca se equivoca

Literal: The person who has a mouth makes mistakes

Similar Saying: Nobody's perfect

Meaning: Everyone makes mistakes

Hacer la vista gorda

Literal: To do the fat view

Similar Saying: To turn a blind eye

Meaning: To pretend not to notice

Cada loco con su tema

Literal: Every crazy person with their issue

Similar Saying: Different strokes for different folks

Meaning: Everyone has their own way of doing things

Año nuevo, vida nueva.

Literally: New year, new life.

A cada cerdo le llega su San Martín.

Literally: Every pig has her Saint Martin.

An English equivalent could be "You reap what you sow."

3. *El que la hace, la paga.*

Literally: He who does it, pays for it.

"What goes around comes around" and the evil that you do to others, will ultimately be your own undoing.

4. *A mal tiempo, buena cara.*

Literally: In bad weather, a good face.

5. *Más ven cuatro ojos que dos.*

Literally: Four eyes are better than two.

An English equivalent could be “Two heads are better than one.”

8. *Donde hay confianza, da asco.*

Literally: Where there is familiarity, it’s disgusting.

The closest English equivalent would be “Familiarity breeds contempt.”

9. *Hoy por ti, mañana por mí.*

Literally: Today for you, tomorrow for me.

This expression is about reciprocity and the golden rule. “You scratch my back and I’ll scratch yours” might also resemble it in meaning, but “*Hoy por ti, mañana por mí*” has a bit more of a positive spin. It’s less of a “quid pro quo” type, instead the actions come from a sense of generosity. It’s like paying the bill at the restaurant and saying to your friend, “Let me get this one. You get the next one.”

11. *El amor es ciego.*

Literally: Love is blind.

13. *Mucho ruido y pocas nueces.*

Literally: Lots of noise, very few nuts.

This saying has something to do about talking a big game and having next to nothing to show for it.

14. *No es oro todo lo que reluce.*

Literally: It's not gold everything that glitters.

This saying encourages us to always see deeper into things—to look beyond the flashes and brilliance, and into the real substance.

3. *Papar moscas.*

Literal meaning: To eat/gulp down flies.

English equivalent: To daydream.

4. *Lavar cerdos con jabón es perder tiempo y jabón.*

Literal meaning: Washing pigs with soap is losing time and soap.

English equivalent: Some things are a waste of time.

6. *No hay burro calvo, ni calabaza con pelo.*

Literal meaning: There isn't any bald monkey nor any pumpkin with hair.

English equivalent: Say what you really know and do what you can really do.

7. *Con paciencia y con maña, un elefante se comió una araña.*

Literal meaning: With patience and skill, an elephant ate a spider.

English equivalent: Little strokes fell great oaks.

9. *Quien fue a Sevilla, perdió su silla.*

Literal translation: He who went to Seville lost his chair.

English equivalent: If you leave your place, you lose it.

10. Ojos que no ven, corazón que no siente.

Literal meaning: Eyes that don't see, heart that doesn't feel.

English equivalent: Long absent, soon forgotten. / Out of sight, out of mind.

11. Las palabras se las lleva el viento.

Literal meaning: The wind blows words away.

English equivalent: Actions speak louder than words.

12. No hay mal que cien años dure, ni cuerpo que lo resista.

Literal translation: There is no evil that could last one hundred years, nor body that could endure that.

English equivalent: Nothing goes on forever.

Al mal tiempo, buena cara.

Translation: Put a good face to the bad times.

Meaning / English equivalent: Be positive even in bad situations.

Camarón que se duerme se lo lleva la corriente.

Translation: The shrimp that falls asleep is swept away by the current.

Meaning / English equivalent: You snooze, you lose.

Del tal palo, tal astilla.

Translation: Such is the stick, such is the chip.

Meaning / English equivalent: A chip off the old block

Meaning / English equivalent: The apple doesn't fall far from the tree.

Meaning / English equivalent: Like father, like son.

El que madruga coge agua clara.

Translation: He who rises early gets clear water.

Meaning / English equivalent: Early bird gets the worm.

No hay mal que por bien no venga.

Translation: There's no bad from which something good doesn't come.

Meaning / English equivalent: Every cloud has a silver lining.