

# ¿Habla español?

Tips to learn Spanish for turf

As the number of Spanish-speaking employees continues to increase in the green industry, supervisors and managers are exploring different ways to remain effective in their operations. The challenges remain the same: overcoming safety, quality and training barriers because of language and cultural differences. Learning and speaking practical Spanish can help mitigate these challenges, but many supervisors and managers believe it's an intimidating task. The following tips can improve superintendents' odds for a successful and meaningful approach to learning Spanish.

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**LEARN WHAT YOU NEED**

If it isn't relevant to your job, it's more difficult to apply and learn. A class at a community college or tapes at the bookstore might focus on ordering food at a restaurant or catching a cab. This usually leads to discouragement for students because they're not able to apply the lessons immediately.

Paul Pimsleur, Ph.D., former head of the language department at The Ohio State University, developed a memory recall system for learning a second language. His language programs are designed in a way to remember a concept or word right before you're likely to forget it.

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Pimsleur also states the human brain tends to store information in short-term, long-term or temporary memory. The destination is based on how important the information is to survival.

These principles helped develop a self-instruction language program – Spanish for Golf Course Management by Spanish Systems. Throughout the years, superintendents have found it helpful because it teaches exactly what's needed to be said. With this method, the principles of relevance and frequency are observed.

**CREATE YOUR OWN PROGRAM**

Before the content for the Spanish for Golf Course Management program was designed, dozens of superintendents were asked what was important for them to say in Spanish related to their daily operations. Most of them mentioned the common assignments for the day and the common mistakes made by Spanish-speaking

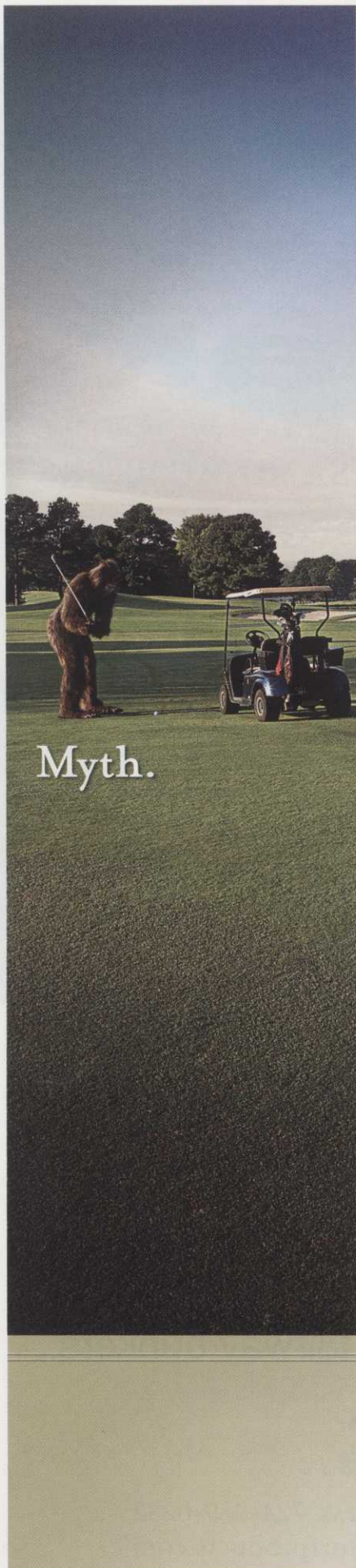
employees who couldn't be trained in English. Then a list of all the items was created, and the items were turned into a set of basic commands. Next, these commands were converted into questions for follow-up, statements for correcting tasks and compliments for praising the corrected task. For example:

- Command – Check the oil in the morning.
- Follow-up – Have you already checked the oil?
- Correction – It's necessary to check the oil in the morning.
- Praise – You always check the oil in the morning, thank you.

You can ask any of your bilingual employees to translate these statements. Focus on a few of them at a time and use them frequently. Make sure your list starts with those actions that are most important and carry small cue cards to assist you.







Myth.

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## EMPLOYEE COMMUNICATION

### PRIVATE INSTRUCTORS

A private instructor is a good way to avoid some pitfalls from generic classes and translation software programs because an instructor can cater the lessons or curriculum to specific needs and explain nuances to avoid flawed literal translations.

A private lesson should cover all language skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing. People learn faster when they perform all four skills and use them on a single concept. Lessons should be contiguous and progressive, always building on the previous lesson.

Frequency of lessons is more important than length of sessions. Two one-hour classes a week are more effective than one two-hour class a week. In fact, half-hour lessons tend to be ideal.

Good lessons begin with repetition, followed by less and less help from the teacher, until you're able to perform the language for a certain scenario. An instructor should understand and focus on your learning strengths. A visual learner will remember written words and images easily. An analytical learner needs more explanation, translation and logic. A hands-on learner learns faster by just saying the words.

Community colleges are a good place to look

for potential instructors. You can share these ideas and tips with them.

### SELF-INSTRUCTION PROGRAMS

Self-instruction programs can be effective if you're disciplined enough to follow through and if all four language skills are – listening, speaking, reading and writing – are covered. For example, few people learn effectively by listening to tapes in the car on the way to work. Remember, people have different learning styles and preferences. It's best if the program is interactive, asking questions and giving you plenty of time to answer them, followed by the correct answer. If the audio program adheres to some of these principles it will take you longer to learn what they're trying to teach.

The program should focus on what you're trying to learn and should be progressive and consistent. Make sure it doesn't start simply and end up throwing a lot of material at you. Many programs try to pack too much information in a few CDs. If your goal is to be fluent, find a program that covers all the grammar and then add content that you can use at work immediately. Don't try to learn the work-related vocabulary later, because you run the risk of never getting there.

## Spanish-learning resources

**Workplace Spanish for Golf Course Superintendents & Landscapers. Includes one CD, book.**  
[www.gcsaa.org](http://www.gcsaa.org)

**Workplace Spanish for Golf Course Superintendents & Landscapers. Minibook, reference.**  
[www.gcsaa.org](http://www.gcsaa.org)

**Spanish for the Green Industry course. Virginia Tech, Barbara Kraft.** [bkraft@vt.edu](mailto:bkraft@vt.edu)

**ILCA Interactive Language Tutorial Phrase Dictionary. CD ROM, audio cassettes, dictionary. Illinois Landscape Contractors Association.** <http://ilca.net/publications.aspx>

**Spanish for Golf Course Management Self-Instruction Kit. Includes book, five CDs, flashcards.** [www.spanishsystems.com](http://www.spanishsystems.com)

**Pocket Spanish for Golf Course Management. Reference.**  
[www.spanishsystems.com](http://www.spanishsystems.com)

**Quick Spanish for Golf Course Management. Reference poster.**  
[www.spanishsystems.com](http://www.spanishsystems.com)

**Search & Say Spanish for Golf Course Management. CD ROM, software.** [www.spanishsystems.com](http://www.spanishsystems.com)





Computer-based programs can be good if sitting in front of a computer fits your lifestyle and learning preferences. If you're an extrovert, this might not be the best approach. Either way, computer-based programs should use auditory and pictorial cues and should be interactive and allow you to use previously learned material. If using a multimedia program, make sure all the media follow the same curriculum. What you hear in the car should be the same as what you do in a workbook as well as on the computer.

#### IMMERSION PROGRAMS

There are two concepts in crash courses: learning by submersion and learning by immersion. With immersion, you have intense lessons with logical explanations and a lot of practice. In submersion, you're subjected to situations where you need to use the language. Because you can only use the foreign language, it's then learned in the moment. These programs frequently come with living arrangements with a family that only speaks Spanish. These are great options for establishing a solid foundation, removing fears and becoming comfortable with the language.

#### QUICK FIX AND REFERENCE MEDIA

There are a number of posters, pocket guides, software packages and books that serve as quick reference Spanish guides for turf management. These media can be effective if you intend to focus on a few phrases at a time. Choose those that have the most meaning to you first. Don't necessarily just follow the order of the medium. There are specific golf course management reference guides in the market with practical phrases and words.

#### TRANSLATION SOFTWARE

Turf management language is specific. There are more stories of failure than success with online and off-the-shelf translation software. Translation software isn't context specific, and most of the applications translate literally. More often, the sentence structure isn't the same in Spanish. For example, a public school in Chicago once tried to translate a memo to students' parents saying: "Tomorrow, the children will get their shots (vaccinations)." The memo in Spanish read, "Tomorrow, the children will get shot at school."

Some turf companies have translated employee manuals with software, resulting in a me-

diocre product and thus projecting a mediocre image to the employees. The subtle messages to the employees might be: "We tried to translate it, but we didn't try hard enough," or "We know there are mistakes, but we don't care."

The surest way is to hire a translator. An employee's relative who's bilingual and makes an attempt to translate a formal document might not always be the best option. There's a Spanish software package that includes more than 1,400 pretranslated phrases and words for turf management called Search & Say Spanish for Golf Course Management. This isn't translation software. It's a database you can search with key words. The software shows you the phrase in both languages. You can hear the pronunciation and actually print small cards or lists in Spanish that you can hand your employees.

#### BECOMING FLUENT


An average adult learner will take eight to 18 months to become fluent if he takes at least three hours of instruction a week and performs all four language skills consistently. The learning skills should be covered in order: listening, speaking, reading and writing. This is how we learned our native language originally.

As mentioned above, a program that covers all of the grammar is necessary. The logic behind grammar is reaffirmed by writing out a structure. Each structure or tense should be taught in all four forms: direct question, open-ended question, affirmative and negative. This is the best sequence for learning a grammatical structure. For example:

- Did you play last night?
- No, I did not play last night.
- What did you do last night?
- I worked last night.

#### A SPANISH COACH

Besides having formal lessons, you should have a coach or practice buddy, preferably someone at work. It's important to find a person with whom you are comfortable. Make as many mistakes as possible. Learning a foreign language involves many different aspects of our personalities and psyches. It's not like learning a skill like tennis or computing. People are challenged to be in a situation where they will be making mistakes constantly for a long time. Don't be afraid to try or you might never get there. Be prepared, and most of all, make sure you're always having fun with the language. **GCI**




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