Some Spanish words spark something in your brain: you hear them once and they stay with your forever. Other words are just the opposite: no matter how many times you read or hear them, they never seem to stick. Why does this happen?

New words are typically hard to remember because your brain is really good at ignoring unfamiliar and irrelevant things. And let’s face it, reading a word like “alcantarilla” can initially feel like a random combination of letters with no relevance in your life.

But if you’re walking on the street in Valencia and your shoe gets stuck on a manhole cover and you can’t get it out, the word “alcantarilla” is going to get seared into your brain for life.

Luckily, you don’t have to go to that extreme to create meaningful associations with new words. All you need to do is follow a 3-step process:

1. **Consume content in Spanish.**
2. **Create your own vocabulary list.**
3. **Review your words every day.**

The devil is in the details, so let’s go over a few tools to make it easier to add new words to your list.

### Essential Vocabulary Building Tools

#### Google Translate Chrome Extension

This extension lets you look up any word in Spanish simply by double-clicking it, without having to first go to the Google Translate page and copy/paste any words.

**Step 1:** Go to this URL.

**Step 2:** Click on Add to Chrome.

**Step 3:** Click on Add Extension.
DeepL Translator

This website is very good at translating between Spanish and English. It often leads to much more natural sentences than those of Google Translate.

Step 1: Go to deepl.com/translator.

Step 2: Type or paste your text in Spanish or English.

Glosbe Dictionary

This dictionary is a great way to look up new words in Spanish or English. It’s especially useful when words have multiple meanings or when you need to see an example sentence.

Step 1: Go to glosbe.com.

Step 2: Look up a word.

Custom Javascript for Websites Chrome Extension

This extension allows you to run JavaScript code to change the functionality of specific websites. You can use my code to add direct links to the Glosbe interface.

Step 1: Go to this URL and click on Add to Chrome.
Step 2: Go to this URL.

Step 3: Click on the Raw button.

Step 4: Select all the text and copy it.

Step 5: Go to glosbe.com again.

Step 6: Click on the cjs icon in your Chrome toolbar.

Step 7: Right-Click on the text area and paste what you copied in Step 4.

Step 8: Scroll to the bottom and click Save.

Step 9: Refresh the page and try out the new links to Wiktionary, Google Images and Reverso.
Reverso Context

This website is great for finding example sentences that fit one of the multiple possible meanings of a word.

Step 1: Go to context.reverso.net/translation and look up a word.

Step 2: Filter by a specific meaning.

Thank you for reading this!

I hope these tools help you get the most out of the time that you’re investing in learning Spanish. Remember that the most important thing is to create a consistent schedule: a daily ritual of finding new words and reviewing old ones.

If you’re having trouble sticking to a daily routine, check out my Daily Spanish Routine for People Who Struggle with Daily Routines.

¡Un abrazo!