75 Mexican Slang

Jerga mexicana — everyday expressions you'll actually hear

525 example sentences — 7 for every expression
Roots, literal translations & connections • Usage notes (Uso)
English translations included

Hablar es practicar. Pick an expression, use it in a sentence out loud, then check it against the examples.

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How to use this workbook

Each expression comes with **7 examples** that mix up the formats — statements, questions, exclamations, different people and tenses. Say each one out loud before you read the English. Under each expression, the shaded box gives you the **roots** (what the words are made of, and their Latin roots and English cousins), the **literal** word-for-word build, and **connections** to other expressions and words you already know — so you lock it in by understanding it, not by memorizing it. The **Uso** line tells you the register: who says it, when it is okay, and how strong it is. With slang, *when* you can say it is half the knowledge.

The last chapter is recognize-only: vulgar expressions you will hear on the street and need to understand — but should not say yourself. They are marked in red, with examples labelled for recognition, not for producing.

A speaking drill: cover the examples, read an expression, and build a sentence with it yourself in Spanish. Then uncover and compare. One chapter a day is plenty — repetition beats cramming.

Quick reference — all expressions

01	¿Qué onda?	What's up?
02	¿Mande?	Pardon? / What was that?
03	Aquí andamos	Here we are / getting by
04	No pasa nada	No worries / it's okay
05	Ya ni modo	Oh well / it is what it is
06	Órale	Wow / okay / let's go
07	Ándale	Come on / exactly / go ahead
08	Ándale pues	Okay then / let's go
09	Sale	Okay / sounds good
10	Va que va	Deal / okay, agreed
11	¡Aguas!	Watch out!
12	No hay bronca	No problem
13	¡Qué rollo!	What's going on? / What a hassle
14	¡Eso mero!	That's exactly it
15	¡La neta!	Seriously! / Honestly!
16	Me late	I like it / I'm into it
17	De plano	Flat-out / seriously
18	Como que...	Kind of / sort of
19	Nel	Nope / no way
20	Simón	Yeah / you bet
21	¡Qué bárbaro!	Wow! / Unbelievable!
22	Está bien equis	It's whatever / mediocre
23	Me vale	I don't care
24	Hacer paro	To do someone a favor / help out
25	Me cae bien / me cae gordo	I like / can't stand someone
26	¡No manches!	No way! / You're kidding!
27	¿A poco?	Really?? / No way, seriously?
28	¡Híjole!	Wow / jeez / oh no
29	¡Chale!	Aw man / come on
30	¡Qué chido!	That's awesome!
31	¡Qué gacho!	That's awful!
32	¡Está cañón!	That's intense / difficult / crazy
33	Está padre	It's nice / cool
34	Está padrísimo	It's really cool
35	Está chido	It's cool
36	A toda madre	It's awesome / great
37	Qué hueva	What a drag / how lazy
38	Lana	Money
39	¿En cuánto me lo dejas?	What's your best price?
40	Chamba	Job / work
41	Jalar	To work / to be in / to pull
42	Echarle ganas	To put in effort
43	Cotorrear	To chat / hang out
44	Echar relajo	To fool around / mess about
45	Cruda	Hangover
46	Ahorita	Right now / in a little while
47	Al rato	Later / in a bit
48	Ya mero	Almost / soon
49	Al tiro	Alert / ready / right on it
50	Luego luego	Right away
51	Echarse un coyotito	To take a little nap
52	Güey / wey	Dude / buddy
53	Cuate	Buddy / friend
54	Carnal	Bro / close friend

55	Carnala	Close female friend
56	Compa	Mate / buddy
57	Chavo / chava	Young guy / young woman
58	Es buena onda	He/she is a nice, chill person
59	Es mala onda	He/she is a jerk / bad vibes
60	Es bien codo	He's really stingy
61	Fregar	To bother / mess up (¡No friegues! = No way!)
62	Apapachar	To cuddle / comfort / pamper
63	Caerle a alguien	To drop by / show up
64	Está de poca madre	It's fucking awesome
65	Chingar	Versatile vulgar verb
66	Pinche	Damn / fucking (intensifier)
67	Cabrón	Dude / bastard / badass
68	Pendejo	Idiot / dumbass
69	Chingado	Damn it
70	Valió madre	It's screwed / went to shit
71	Está de la chingada	It's fucking awful
72	¿Qué pedo?	What's up? / What the hell?
73	Al chile	Honestly / for real
74	No hay pedo	No problem (vulgar)
75	Qué poca	That's messed up

Chapter 1

Greetings & reactions

Expressions 1–13

01 · ¿Qué onda?

What's up?

Raíz: Picture a wave rolling in off the sea. Onda comes from Latin unda, wave — the same root as English undulate, inundate and abundant. In Mexico the wave became the vibe, the news, the thing coming your way, so ¿Qué onda? is really asking: what wave is rolling in — what's happening, what's new?
Literal: What wave is rolling in?
Conecta: Greeting cousin of ¡Qué rollo! (#13); the rude twin is ¿Qué pedo? (#72), recognize only.
Uso: Very common and friendly among friends, family and young people; fine with strangers your age in casual settings, but use a polite greeting with elders or in formal situations.

1. ¿Qué onda, Cielo? ¿Ya llegaste a Puebla? *(What's up, Cielo? Did you get to Puebla already?)*
2. ¿Qué onda con el tráfico? Llevamos una hora parados. *(What's up with the traffic? We've been stuck for an hour.)*
3. Le pregunté qué onda y me dijo que todo bien. *(I asked him what's up and he told me everything's fine.)*
4. ¿Qué onda, Fer? ¿Quieres jugar con Joni en el parque? *(What's up, Fer? Do you want to play with Joni in the park?)*
5. Mañana le voy a decir: ¿qué onda, cuate? ¿Nos vemos? *(Tomorrow I'm going to say to him: what's up, buddy? Shall we meet?)*
6. ¿Qué onda con ese ruido? Anoche no me dejó dormir. *(What's up with that noise? Last night it kept me from sleeping.)*
7. Cuando lo vi en el mercado, solo le dije: ¿qué onda? *(When I saw him at the market, I just said: what's up?)*

02 · ¿Mande?

Pardon? / What was that?

Raíz: Mande is the polite way to say 'say that again?' — and the word itself explains why. It comes from mandar, to send or order, from Latin mandare, the root of English mandate and command. You are politely asking the other person to send the words over to you once more, like a parcel handed across with respect.
Literal: Send it to me — say it again.
Conecta: Polite twin of a plain ¿qué?; pairs with ¿A poco? (#27) for a surprised repeat.
Uso: Polite and very Mexican; use it with anyone, including elders, shopkeepers and strangers. It is the respectful way to say 'pardon?' and you will hear it constantly in Puebla.

1. ¿Mande? No te escuché por el ruido de la calle. *(Pardon? I couldn't hear you over the street noise.)*
2. La señora del mercado me dijo algo y yo solo dije: ¿mande? *(The woman at the market said something to me and I just said: pardon?)*
3. ¿Mande, doctor? ¿Me puede repetir la hora de la cita? *(Pardon, doctor? Could you repeat the appointment time for me?)*
4. Mi mamá me llamó desde la cocina y le contesté: ¿mande? *(My mom called me from the kitchen and I answered her: pardon?)*
5. Si no entiendes algo en Puebla, di ¿mande? con una sonrisa. *(If you don't understand something in Puebla, say pardon? with a smile.)*
6. ¿Mande? Pensé que habías dicho que venías mañana. *(Pardon? I thought you said you were coming tomorrow.)*
7. Ayer en la tienda dije ¿mande? como diez veces. *(Yesterday in the store I said pardon? about ten times.)*

03 · Aquí andamos

Here we are / getting by

Raíz: Nobody is standing still here — they are walking along. Andamos comes from andar, to walk, a cousin of Latin ambulare, which also gives English amble and ambulance. Saying 'here we walk' is a gentle picture of getting through the days one step at a time: I'm still moving, I'm doing okay, I'm getting by.
Literal: Here we are, walking along.
Conecta: Relaxed answer cousin of No pasa nada (#4) and Ya ni modo (#5).
Uso: Casual and warm, used with friends, family and acquaintances when someone asks how you are. It signals 'I'm doing okay, getting by' without inviting a long story.

1. ¿Cómo estás? Aquí andamos, echándole ganas al trabajo. *(How are you? Here we are, putting effort into work.)*
2. Aquí andamos, esperando a que llegue el autobús. *(Here we are, waiting for the bus to arrive.)*
3. ¿Qué tal la vida? Aquí andamos, sin quejarnos. *(How's life? Here we are, no complaints.)*
4. Ayer le escribí a mi hermano: aquí andamos, con frío y café. *(Yesterday I wrote to my brother: here we are, cold and with coffee.)*
5. Aquí andamos todavía, buscando un buen lugar para comer. *(Here we are still, looking for a good place to eat.)*
6. Si alguien te pregunta cómo vas, contesta: aquí andamos. *(If someone asks you how you're doing, answer: here we are.)*
7. Aquí andamos, Joni y yo, caminando por el cerro. *(Here we are, Joni and I, walking on the hill.)*

04 · No pasa nada

No worries / it's okay

Raíz: Think of trouble as something passing by on the road. Pasa comes from pasar, to pass or step by, from Latin passare — the root of English pass and passage. Nada is simply nothing. So no pasa nada pictures a moment where nothing bad ever walked past you: nothing happened, nothing was harmed, and there is nothing to worry about.
Literal: Nothing passes — nothing happens.
Conecta: Calming cousin of No hay bronca (#12) and Ya ni modo (#5).
Uso: Gentle and reassuring, fine with anyone, including children, elders and patients. Use it to calm someone down or to say a small accident does not matter.

1. Perdón por llegar tarde. — No pasa nada, siéntate. *(Sorry for being late. — No worries, sit down.)*
2. Se me cayó el vaso, pero no pasa nada, lo limpio. *(I dropped the glass, but it's okay, I'll clean it up.)*
3. No pasa nada si no entiendes todo el español todavía. *(It's okay if you don't understand all the Spanish yet.)*
4. Ayer choqué el carrito del súper y el señor dijo: no pasa nada. *(Yesterday I bumped the supermarket cart and the man said: no worries.)*
5. No pasa nada, mañana lo intentamos otra vez. *(No worries, tomorrow we'll try again.)*
6. ¿Te preocupó el examen? No pasa nada, te fue bien. *(Were you worried about the exam? It's okay, you did well.)*
7. Si Joni ladra mucho, no pasa nada, es muy amistosa. *(If Joni barks a lot, it's okay, she's very friendly.)*

05 · Ya ni modo

Oh well / it is what it is

Raíz: The way has run out — that is the whole shrug. Ya means already, ni means not even, and modo is the way or manner, from Latin modus, the root of English mode, mood and modify. Put together, it says there is not even a way left to fix this, so you stop pushing against a closed door and accept what is.
Literal: Already not even a way.
Conecta: Resigned cousin of No pasa nada (#4); pairs with ¡Chale! (#29) for disappointment.
Uso: Casual and mildly resigned, used with friends and family when something is lost or cannot be fixed. It is not rude, just accepting; avoid it in very formal settings.

1. Se acabó el pan dulce. Ya ni modo, compro galletas. *(The sweet bread is gone. Oh well, I'll buy cookies.)*
2. Perdimos el autobús. Ya ni modo, caminamos. *(We missed the bus. Oh well, we walk.)*
3. Ya ni modo, mañana será otro día. *(Oh well, tomorrow will be another day.)*
4. Se me olvidó el paraguas y llovió. Ya ni modo. *(I forgot my umbrella and it rained. Oh well.)*
5. No alcanzó la lana para el boleto. Ya ni modo, voy la próxima semana. *(The money didn't stretch to the ticket. Oh well, I'll go next week.)*
6. Ya ni modo, si no hay mole, pedimos tacos. *(Oh well, if there's no mole, we'll order tacos.)*
7. Llegué tarde a la cita y ya ni modo, tuve que esperar. *(I got to the appointment late and, oh well, I had to wait.)*

06 · Órale

Wow / okay / let's go

Raíz: Here is an honest gap: nobody knows for sure where órale comes from. The favourite guess is that it grew out of ahora, now — from Latin hac hora, at this hour, the root of English hour — with a -le tacked on, a push to act now. It is only a guess. What is certain is the push itself: surprise, agreement, let's go.
Literal: Origin uncertain — no word-for-word build.
Conecta: Multi-use cousin of Ándale (#7) and Sale (#9); its wow sense pairs with ¡Híjole! (#28).
Uso: Very flexible and informal: surprise, agreement or 'let's go', depending on tone. Fine with friends and family; in formal settings use a plain 'sí' or 'de acuerdo' instead.

1. ¡Órale! ¡Qué bonita está la iglesia! *(Wow! How beautiful the church is!)*
2. ¿Vamos al mercado? — ¡Órale, vámonos! *(Shall we go to the market? — Okay, let's go!)*
3. ¡Órale! No sabía que hablabas tan bien español. *(Wow! I didn't know you spoke Spanish so well.)*
4. Órale, pues, ayúdame con estas bolsas. *(Okay then, help me with these bags.)*
5. Ayer vi el volcán y dije: ¡órale, qué impresionante! *(Yesterday I saw the volcano and said: wow, how impressive!)*
6. ¡Órale! ¿En serio te vas a Puebla en diciembre? *(Wow! Are you really going to Puebla in December?)*
7. Órale, ya es hora de salir, no llegamos tarde. *(Come on, it's time to leave, let's not be late.)*

07 · Ándale

Come on / exactly / go ahead

Raíz: Ándale is walking, turned into a nudge. It comes from andar, to walk — a cousin of Latin ambulare, which also gives English amble and ambulance — with the little pronoun -le, to it, stuck on the end. Picture yourself walking toward the thing: hurry up, go on, go ahead. Said warmly, the same push becomes a happy 'exactly, that's it.'
Literal: Go on — walk to it.
Conecta: Urging twin of Órale (#6) and Ándale pues (#8); agrees like ¡Eso mero! (#14).
Uso: Informal and warm, used with friends, family and children to hurry someone, agree or encourage. The tone decides the meaning, so say it with a smile when you mean 'exactly'.

1. Ándale, apúrate, que ya viene el camión. *(Come on, hurry up, the bus is coming.)*
2. ¿Te gusta el mole? — Ándale, eso mero. *(Do you like the mole? — Exactly, that's it.)*
3. Ándale, pruébalo, no te vas a arrepentir. *(Go ahead, try it, you won't regret it.)*
4. Ándale, cuéntame qué pasó ayer en la clínica. *(Come on, tell me what happened yesterday at the clinic.)*
5. Le dije ándale a Fer y corrió a jugar con Joni. *(I said come on to Fer and he ran off to play with Joni.)*
6. Ándale, no seas así, acompáñame al mercado. *(Come on, don't be like that, come with me to the market.)*
7. ¿Mañana a las ocho? Ándale, quedamos así. *(Tomorrow at eight? Okay, that's settled then.)*

08 · Ándale pues

Okay then / let's go

Raíz: This is ándale with a handshake on the end. Pues means then, or well — it comes from Latin post, after, the root of English post- and posterior, as in postscript. Adding it turns a nudge into a settled thing: walk on, then, we're doing this. It is the sound of a plan closing and feet starting to move.
Literal: Go on, then — well.
Conecta: Closing twin of Ándale (#7) and Va que va (#10); seals a plan.
Uso: Friendly and informal, used to close an agreement or start moving. Fine with friends and family; it sounds decisive and warm, never rude, when the tone is light.

1. Ándale pues, nos vemos a las seis en la plaza. *(Okay then, we'll meet at six in the plaza.)*
2. ¿Nos vamos ya? — Ándale pues, vámonos. *(Shall we leave now? — Okay then, let's go.)*
3. Ándale pues, yo pago el café esta vez. *(Okay then, I'll pay for the coffee this time.)*
4. Si tú cocinas, yo lavo los platos. Ándale pues. *(If you cook, I'll wash the dishes. Okay then.)*
5. Ándale pues, mañana empezamos la dieta, hoy no. *(Okay then, tomorrow we start the diet, not today.)*
6. Me dijo ándale pues y cerramos el trato. *(He said okay then and we closed the deal.)*
7. Ándale pues, Fer, ponte los zapatos y salimos. *(Okay then, Fer, put your shoes on and we'll head out.)*

09 · Sale

Okay / sounds good

Raíz: Sale is a plan coming out right. It comes from salir, to go out, from Latin salire, to leap out — the root of English salient and sally. Picture an idea leaping out of the talking stage and into the real world: it came out, it worked, we're on. That is why one word can close a deal, a price, or a plan tonight.
Literal: It comes out — it works.
Conecta: Agreement cousin of Va que va (#10) and Simón (#20); opposite of Nel (#19).
Uso: Very common and casual, used with friends, family, coworkers and vendors to accept a plan or price. It is not formal, but it is polite enough for everyday deals.

1. ¿Nos vemos mañana? — Sale, a las diez. *(Shall we meet tomorrow? — Okay, at ten.)*
2. Sale, yo llevo las tortillas y tú el queso. *(Sounds good, I'll bring the tortillas and you bring the cheese.)*
3. ¿Te late ir al cine? — Sale, me late. *(Do you feel like going to the movies? — Okay, I'm into it.)*
4. Sale, quedamos en eso, no se diga más. *(Okay, that's settled, say no more.)*
5. Ayer le dije sale al vendedor y me dio descuento. *(Yesterday I said okay to the vendor and he gave me a discount.)*
6. Sale, mañana te llamo para confirmar la hora. *(Okay, tomorrow I'll call you to confirm the time.)*
7. ¿Caminamos o tomamos taxi? — Sale, caminamos. *(Shall we walk or take a taxi? — Okay, let's walk.)*

10 · Va que va

Deal / okay, agreed

Raíz: Va is the verb ir, to go, from Latin ire — the root hiding inside English exit, to go out, and itinerary, a planned going. Saying it twice doubles the promise: it goes, and it goes again, no backing out. It is the sound of two people nodding at the same moment and meaning it.
Literal: It goes, that it goes.
Conecta: Deal twin of Sale (#9) and Ándale pues (#8); doubling echoes Luego luego (#50).
Uso: Friendly and casual, used with friends and family to seal a plan. It sounds warmer and more committed than a plain 'sí'; avoid it in formal business writing.

1. ¿Nos vemos el sábado? — Va que va. *(Shall we meet on Saturday? — Deal.)*
2. Va que va, yo te ayudo con la mudanza. *(Deal, I'll help you with the move.)*
3. Tú compras el pan y yo el café. Va que va. *(You buy the bread and I'll buy the coffee. Deal.)*
4. Le propuse el plan y me contestó: va que va. *(I proposed the plan to him and he answered: deal.)*
5. Va que va, mañana nos vemos en la clínica a las ocho. *(Deal, tomorrow we'll meet at the clinic at eight.)*
6. ¿Me haces paro con esto? — Va que va. *(Will you do me a favor with this? — Deal.)*
7. Va que va, Fer, jugamos después de comer. *(Deal, Fer, we'll play after eating.)*

11 · ¡Aguas!

Watch out!

Raíz: The story goes that people once shouted 'water!' before tossing dirty water out of a window — a warning to anyone below to get out of the way. Aguas comes from agua, water, from Latin aqua, the root of English aquatic and aquarium. The warning outlived the buckets: now the cry means watch out, whatever the danger is.
Literal: Waters! Watch out for water.
Conecta: Warning cousin of the vulgar ¿Qué pedo? (#72); pairs with Al tiro (#49), staying alert.
Uso: Urgent and informal, shouted to warn someone of danger: a car, a step, a hot pot. Anyone can say it; it is a warning, not an insult, so tone matters more than setting.

1. ¡Aguas! Viene un coche por la calle. *(Watch out! A car is coming down the street.)*
2. ¡Aguas con el escalón, está muy alto! *(Watch out for the step, it's very high!)*
3. ¡Aguas, Joni! No comas eso del suelo. *(Watch out, Joni! Don't eat that off the ground.)*
4. Ayer casi me caigo y mi amiga gritó: ¡aguas! *(Yesterday I almost fell and my friend shouted: watch out!)*
5. ¡Aguas con la olla, está hirviendo! *(Watch out for the pot, it's boiling!)*
6. ¡Aguas! El piso está mojado y resbala. *(Watch out! The floor is wet and slippery.)*
7. Si ves un perro suelto, grita ¡aguas! y aléjate. *(If you see a loose dog, shout watch out! and step away.)*

12 · No hay bronca

No problem

Raíz: No fight here — that is the whole message. Hay means there is, from haber, to have, from Latin habere, the root of English have and habit. Bronca is a fight or a row; where it came from is uncertain, though it may be tied to bronco, rough. Whatever its birth, the picture is clear: nothing to fight about, nothing to worry about.
Literal: There is no fight, no trouble.
Conecta: Calm cousin of No pasa nada (#4); polite twin of vulgar No hay pedo (#74).
Uso: Casual and reassuring, common with friends, vendors and coworkers. It means 'no problem' and is much safer than its vulgar twin; fine in everyday talk, not in formal writing.

1. ¿Me prestas tu paraguas? — No hay bronca, tómalo. *(Will you lend me your umbrella? — No problem, take it.)*
2. Perdón por el desorden. — No hay bronca, así es la casa. *(Sorry about the mess. — No problem, that's how the house is.)*
3. No hay bronca si llegas un poco tarde mañana. *(No problem if you arrive a bit late tomorrow.)*
4. Le pedí ayuda al vecino y me dijo: no hay bronca. *(I asked the neighbor for help and he said: no problem.)*
5. No hay bronca, yo pago la cuenta esta vez. *(No problem, I'll pay the bill this time.)*
6. ¿Te molesta si pongo música? — No hay bronca. *(Do you mind if I put music on? — No problem.)*
7. Ayer se me olvidó tu libro, pero dijiste: no hay bronca. *(Yesterday I forgot your book, but you said: no problem.)*

13 · ¡Qué rollo!

What's going on? / What a hassle

Raíz: A rollo is a roll — from Latin rotulus, a roll, the root of English roll and scroll. Picture a roll of paper unrolling: a long chat that keeps going, or a tangle that keeps unwinding into more trouble. That is why the same word can open a friendly hello or groan about a hassle — it depends on which way the roll is going.
Literal: What a roll — what a tangle!
Conecta: Greeting cousin of ¿Qué onda? (#1); its hassle sense pairs with ¡Qué gacho! (#31).
Uso: Informal and very Mexican, used with friends and peers as a greeting or to complain about a hassle. Tone decides the meaning; avoid it with elders or in formal settings.

1. ¡Qué rollo, compa! ¿Cómo te va? *(What's going on, buddy! How's it going?)*
2. ¡Qué rollo con la fila del banco! Tardé dos horas. *(What a hassle with the bank line! It took me two hours.)*
3. ¡Qué rollo! Se me ponchó la llanta en la carretera. *(What a hassle! I got a flat tire on the highway.)*
4. Llegó mi primo y me saludó: ¡qué rollo! *(My cousin arrived and greeted me: what's going on!)*
5. ¡Qué rollo con este calor! No se aguanta. *(What's up with this heat! It's unbearable.)*
6. Mañana voy a preguntarles: ¿qué rollo, ya comieron? *(Tomorrow I'm going to ask them: what's going on, have you eaten yet?)*
7. ¡Qué rollo! Otra vez se fue la luz en la casa. *(What a hassle! The power went out at home again.)*

Chapter 2

Agreement, emphasis & opinions

Expressions 14–25

14 · ¡Eso mero!

That's exactly it

Raíz: Eso is that, and mero is the pure, exact thing — from Latin merus, pure and sheer, the root of English mere and merely. Picture something with nothing mixed into it: not almost the one, not nearly the one, but the one itself, exactly. That is the warmth of it, too: you are saying yes, that is precisely what I meant.
Literal: That is the very one!
Conecta: Agreement twin of Ándale (#7) and Simón (#20); mero also colors De plano (#17).
Uso: Warm and friendly, used with friends and family to agree enthusiastically. It sounds affectionate, not formal; perfect for agreeing with Cielo or a vendor when they guess right.

1. ¡Eso mero! Puebla es justo el lugar que quiero visitar. *(That's the one! Puebla is exactly the place I want to visit.)*
2. ¿Quieres mole? — ¡Eso mero! *(Do you want mole? — That's exactly it!)*
3. Encontré mi cartera perdida. — ¡Eso mero! *(I found my lost wallet. — That's exactly it!)*
4. Cuando por fin entendí el chiste, dije: ¡eso mero! *(When I finally understood the joke, I said: that's exactly it!)*
5. Un café bien cargado con pan dulce de canela, ¡eso mero! *(A strong coffee with cinnamon bread — that's exactly it.)*
6. El doctor dijo que tengo que caminar más. ¡Eso mero, lo haré! *(The doctor said I need to walk more. That's exactly it, I will.)*
7. ¿Te referías a la casa roja? — ¡Eso mero! *(Did you mean the red house? — That's exactly it!)*

15 · ¡La neta!

Seriously! / Honestly!

Raíz: La neta swears by the clean truth. Neta comes from neto, clean and unmixed, from Latin nitidus, shining clean — the root behind English neat. Picture truth with nothing stirred into it, no spin and no hiding: the net, straight version. Saying it is a small oath — this is the honest one, the real one, no joke.
Literal: The clean truth — honestly!
Conecta: Honesty cousin of De plano (#17); its vulgar twin is Al chile (#73), recognize only.
Uso: Informal and common with friends, family and peers; it means 'honestly' or 'seriously'. It is not vulgar, but it is casual, so avoid it in very formal or professional settings.

1. ¡La neta! Este mole está delicioso. *(Honestly, this mole is delicious.)*
2. La neta, no entendí nada de esa reunión. *(Honestly, I didn't understand anything at that meeting.)*
3. La neta, te ves cansado. Deberías descansar. *(Seriously, you look tired. You should rest.)*
4. La neta, lo que me dijo me sorprendió mucho. *(Honestly, what he told me surprised me a lot.)*
5. ¿Sabes qué? La neta, prefiero los tacos a la pizza. *(You know what? Honestly, I prefer tacos to pizza.)*
6. Ayer dije la neta de que estaba nervioso por el viaje. *(Yesterday I said honestly that I was nervous about the trip.)*
7. La neta, Cielo es una gran persona. *(Seriously, Cielo is a great person.)*

16 · Me late

I like it / I'm into it

Raíz: Your heart does the talking here. Late comes from latir, to beat, the way a heart beats — where latir itself came from is uncertain, so the image is the lesson, not the etymology. When something te late, your heart gives a little beat for it: you feel drawn to the plan, you like it, you are in.
Literal: It beats to me — my heart says yes.
Conecta: Liking cousin of Está chido (#35) and Está padre (#33), which praise things instead.
Uso: Casual and friendly, used with friends and family to say you like a plan or idea. 'No me late' is a gentle no; it is never rude, and it works in everyday conversation.

1. Me late el plan de ir al mercado en la mañana. *(I like the plan of going to the market in the morning.)*
2. ¿Te late salir a caminar con Joni? — Me late mucho. *(Do you like going for a walk with Joni? — I like it a lot.)*
3. No me late esa película, mejor elegimos otra. *(I'm not into that movie, let's choose another one.)*
4. Me latió la idea de comer tacos ayer. *(I liked the idea of eating tacos yesterday.)*
5. ¿Te late el café nuevo? — Me late, el café está buenísimo. *(Do you like the new café? — I like it, the coffee is really good.)*
6. Me latiría viajar a Huatulco el año que viene si puedo. *(I would like to travel to Huatulco next year if I can.)*
7. A la familia le va a latir mi plan para Navidad. *(The family is going to like my plan for Christmas.)*

17 · De plano

Flat-out / seriously

Raíz: Plano means flat, from Latin planus, flat and level — the root of English plane, plain and plan. Picture laying a statement flat on the table, with no angle, no softening and nothing tucked underneath. Saying something de plano is saying it straight and level, the whole thing at once, no hedging.
Literal: Flat-out — on the flat.
Conecta: Force cousin of ¡La neta! (#15) and ¡Eso mero! (#14); opposite of Como que... (#18).
Uso: Informal and emphatic, used with friends and family when you mean something flat-out or seriously. It strengthens a statement; avoid it when you need a soft, diplomatic tone.

1. De plano no pude dormir anoche. *(Flat-out, I couldn't sleep last night.)*
2. De plano dijo que no y se fue. *(He flat-out said no and left.)*
3. De plano el examen estuvo muy difícil. *(Flat-out, the exam was very hard.)*
4. Si sigue lloviendo, de plano nos quedamos en casa. *(If it keeps raining, flat-out, we'll stay home.)*
5. De plano a ella no le gusta nada el picante. *(She flat-out doesn't like spicy food at all.)*
6. Ayer el tráfico estuvo de plano imposible. *(Yesterday the traffic was flat-out impossible.)*
7. De plano no manejaría de noche por esa carretera. *(Flat-out, I would not drive at night on that road.)*

18 · Como que...

Kind of / sort of

Raíz: Como means like or as — it comes from Latin quomodo, in what way — and que is that. Put them together and you start a comparison you never finish: like that, as if… and then the sentence trails off. It is a soft way to guess, to report an impression, or to disagree without ever landing the blow.
Literal: Like that… as if it were.
Conecta: Hedging cousin of Me late (#16); contrasts with De plano (#17), which removes doubt.
Uso: Very common in casual speech with friends and family, used to hedge, guess or report an impression. It sounds unsure by design; avoid it when you need a firm answer.

1. Como que me preocupa que Joni coma cosas de la calle. *(It kind of worries me that Joni eats things off the street.)*
2. Como que te ves cansado, ¿estás bien? *(You look kind of tired, are you okay?)*
3. Ayer como que no quería ir a la fiesta. *(Yesterday he kind of didn't want to go to the party.)*
4. La sopa está como que picosa, pero rica. *(The soup is kind of spicy, but tasty.)*
5. Como que me dio la impresión de que no me entendió. *(It kind of seemed to me that he didn't understand me.)*
6. Hablaba como que bajito, como si estuviera nerviosa. *(She spoke kind of quietly, as if she were nervous.)*
7. Si te sientes como que raro, dímelo luego luego. *(If you feel kind of strange, tell me right away.)*

19 · Nel

Nope / no way

Raíz: Nel is just no with its corners cut off. No comes from Latin non, not — the root of English non- and none. Clipping it short turns a flat refusal into something light and playful, the way English turns no into nope. It is a quick, friendly block, not a slammed door — but only with people who know you well.
Literal: No — clipped, playful nope.
Conecta: No twin of Simón (#20); contrasts with Ándale pues (#8), which closes with yes.
Uso: Very informal and playful, used with close friends, family and young people for a quick 'nope'. It is too casual for elders, strangers or formal settings; use 'no' there instead.

1. ¿Vas a la fiesta? — Nel, me quedo en casa. *(Are you going to the party? — Nope, I'm staying home.)*
2. ¿Quieres más café? — Nel, ya tomé dos tazas. *(Do you want more coffee? — Nope, I already had two cups.)*
3. Nel, hoy no tengo ganas de cocinar. *(Nope, I don't feel like cooking today.)*
4. Me pidió dinero y le dije nel. *(He asked me for money and I said nope.)*
5. Nel, esa tienda no abre los domingos. *(Nope, that store isn't open on Sundays.)*
6. ¿Vamos en coche? — Nel, vamos caminando. *(Are we going by car? — Nope, we're going walking.)*
7. Si te vuelve a preguntar, solo di nel y sigue. *(If he asks you again, just say nope and move on.)*

20 · Simón

Yeah / you bet

Raíz: Simón is the name Simon, borrowed as a yes — from Hebrew Shim'on, through Latin Simon. It works because it rhymes with sí, yes, and because answering with a name feels like a wink: yes, indeed, you bet. English does the same trick with 'you bet' or 'absolutely' — a little wordplay standing in for a plain yes.
Literal: Yes — Simon! You bet.
Conecta: Yes twin of Nel (#19); joins Sale (#9) and Va que va (#10).
Uso: Informal and cheerful, used with friends, family and young people for an enthusiastic yes. It is playful, not formal; use 'sí' with elders, strangers or at work.

1. ¿Vas a Puebla? — ¡Simón, claro que sí! *(Are you going to Puebla? — Yeah, you bet!)*
2. ¿Quieres tacos? — ¡Simón! *(Do you want tacos? — Yeah!)*
3. Simón, así fue como pasó la historia. *(Yeah, that's how the story went.)*
4. Le pregunté si le gustó el regalo y me dijo simón. *(I asked him if he liked the gift and he said yeah.)*
5. Simón, mañana en la mañana te ayudo. *(Yeah, I'll help you tomorrow morning.)*
6. ¿Me entiendes? — Simón, todo claro. *(Do you understand me? — Yeah, all clear.)*
7. Simón, vamos al mercado ahorita. *(Yeah, let's go to the market now.)*

21 · ¡Qué bárbaro!

Wow! / Unbelievable!

Raíz: Bárbaro comes from Latin barbarus, foreign and wild — the root of English barbarian and barbaric. The old Romans used it for outsiders beyond their world, people whose ways seemed wild and extreme. Mexicans kept the wildness and dropped the insult: something bárbaro is so big, so much, or so surprising that ordinary words cannot hold it.
Literal: What a barbarian — how wild!
Conecta: Amazement cousin of ¡Híjole! (#28) and ¡Qué chido! (#30); pairs with ¡Está cañón! (#32).
Uso: Informal and expressive, used with friends and family for surprise, admiration or shock. It is not an insult when said this way; tone decides whether it praises or scolds.

1. ¡Qué bárbaro! ¡Qué casa tan grande! *(Wow! What a huge house!)*
2. ¡Qué bárbaro! ¡Te comiste cinco tacos! *(Unbelievable! You ate five tacos!)*
3. ¡Qué bárbaro! Arregló el coche en diez minutos. *(What a man! He fixed the car in ten minutes.)*
4. ¡Qué bárbaro! ¡Qué calor hace hoy! *(Wow! How hot it is today!)*
5. Cantó tan bonito, ¡qué bárbara! *(She sang so beautifully, unbelievable!)*
6. ¡Qué bárbaro! La fila duró tres horas. *(Unbelievable! The line was three hours long.)*
7. ¡Qué bárbaro! Tu español suena mejor cada día. *(Wow! Your Spanish sounds better every day.)*

22 · Está bien equis

It's whatever / mediocre

Raíz: Está comes from estar, to stand, from Latin stare — the root of English state. Bien is well, from Latin bene, the root of English benefit. And equis is simply the letter X — the unknown in algebra, the whatever in a shrug. Something está bien equis is standing there as an X: not good, not bad, just whatever, not worth a second look.
Literal: It is well X — whatever.
Conecta: Shrug cousin of Ya ni modo (#5) and Me vale (#23), unlike Está padre (#33).
Uso: Very informal, used with friends and peers to call something mediocre or 'whatever'. It is a shrug, not an insult, but it sounds dismissive, so avoid it with the person who made it.

1. La película estuvo bien equis, ni buena ni mala. *(The movie was whatever, neither good nor bad.)*
2. ¿Cómo estuvo la comida? Estuvo bien equis, nada especial. *(How was the food? It was whatever, nothing special.)*
3. La clase estuvo bien equis, casi me duermo. *(The class was whatever, I almost fell asleep.)*
4. Su canción nueva está bien equis, prefiero la vieja. *(His new song is whatever, I prefer the old one.)*
5. El hotel estaba bien equis, pero la cama era cómoda. *(The hotel was whatever, but the bed was comfortable.)*
6. Estuvo bien equis, así que no lo recomendaría. *(It was whatever, so I wouldn't recommend it.)*
7. La fiesta de ayer estuvo bien equis, me fui temprano. *(Yesterday's party was whatever, I left early.)*

23 · Me vale

I don't care

Raíz: Vale comes from valer, to be worth, from Latin valere, to be strong or worth — the root of English value, valid and valiant. Picture weighing a thing in your hand and finding it counts for nothing with you: it has no value to you, no weight. Me vale is that shrug out loud — I don't care, it means nothing to me.
Literal: It is worth nothing to me.
Conecta: Indifference cousin of Está bien equis (#22) and Ya ni modo (#5).
Uso: Blunt and informal; it means 'I don't care' and can sound rude, especially to elders or strangers. Use it only with close friends, and soften it with a smile when you can.

1. Me vale lo que digan de mí. *(I don't care what they say about me.)*
2. ¿Te importa la lluvia? — Me vale, vamos de todos modos. *(Do you care about the rain? — I don't care, let's go anyway.)*
3. Me valió su opinión e hice las cosas a mi manera. *(I didn't care about his opinion and I did it my way.)*
4. Me vale el precio, quiero el buen café. *(I don't care about the price, I want the good coffee.)*
5. A él le vale todo, siempre hace lo que quiere. *(He doesn't care about anything, he always does what he wants.)*
6. Me vale si es tarde, te espero. *(I don't care if it's late, I'll wait for you.)*
7. No digas 'me vale' tan fuerte; suena grosero. *(Don't say 'I don't care' so loudly; it sounds rude.)*

24 · Hacer paro

To do someone a favor / help out

Raíz: Hacer means to make or do, from Latin facere — the root of English fact and factory. Paro is a stop, from parar, to stop: you put a halt in your day. So hacer paro is making a stop for someone — pulling over on the road of your day to lend a hand. It is a small kindness, built into the word.
Literal: To make a stop — lend a hand.
Conecta: Helping cousin of Caerle a alguien (#63); pairs with Va que va (#10).
Uso: Casual and warm, used with friends, family, neighbors and coworkers to ask for or offer a favor. It is everyday language, not formal, and it implies a small, quick help.

1. ¿Me haces un paro y me guardas la bolsa? *(Can you do me a favor and hold my bag?)*
2. Ayer me hizo un paro sacando a pasear a Joni. *(He did me a favor yesterday by taking Joni for a walk.)*
3. Hazme un paro: dile al jefe que llego un poco tarde. *(Do me a favor: tell the boss I'll be a little late.)*
4. Si me haces paro con la mudanza, te pago la comida. *(If you help me out with the move, I'll pay for lunch.)*
5. Mi vecino me hizo un paro prestándome su escalera. *(My neighbor helped me out by lending me his ladder.)*
6. ¿Me harías un paro y le llamarías a Cielo por mí? *(Would you do me a favor and call Cielo for me?)*
7. Ella siempre me hace paro cuando ando apurado. *(She always helps me out when I'm in a hurry.)*

25 · Me cae bien / me cae gordo

I like / can't stand someone

Raíz: Caer means to fall, from Latin cadere — the root of English cadence and cascade. Bien is well, from Latin bene. Gordo means fat or heavy, from Latin gurdus. The picture is a person landing on you: some people fall lightly and well, easy to carry, while others land heavy, like a weight on your chest — and you cannot stand them.
Literal: He falls well — or heavy — on me.
Conecta: Liking twin of Es buena onda (#58), opposite of Es mala onda (#59).
Uso: Casual and common, used with friends and family to say you like or cannot stand someone. 'Me cae gordo' is blunt, so say it only about people who are not present.

1. Me cae bien Cielo, es muy buena onda. *(I really like Cielo, she's very nice.)*
2. Me cae gordo ese señor, siempre grita. *(I can't stand that man, he always yells.)*
3. Mi vecino nuevo me cae bien, ayer me ayudó. *(My new neighbor likes me, he helped me yesterday.)*
4. A mi hermano le cae gordo el vecino nuevo, no se hablan. *(My brother can't stand the new neighbor; they don't speak to each other.)*
5. Fer me cae bien, jugamos fútbol juntos. *(I like Fer; we played soccer together.)*
6. Antes mi jefe me caía bien, pero ahora me cae gordo. *(I used to like my boss, but now I can't stand him.)*
7. La maestra te cae bien, ¿verdad? Es muy amable. *(The teacher likes you, right? She's very kind.)*

Chapter 3

Surprise, disbelief & exclamations

Expressions 26–37

26 · ¡No manches!

No way! / You're kidding!

Raíz: ¡No manches! is Mexico's polite dodge around a much ruder phrase — no mames. Same shocked rhythm, same wide eyes, but manchar, to stain or smudge, from Latin maculare, the root of English immaculate, 'spotless', steps in for the swear word. Picture someone saying 'you're kidding — don't smear me with that story.' The stain image stuck; the rudeness didn't.
Literal: Don't stain [it]!
Conecta: Disbelief twin of ¿a poco? (#27) and ¡qué bárbaro! (#21); softer than ¡no friegues! (#61).
Uso: The everyday shock word in Mexico — use it with friends, family, and in casual shops. Strong feeling, but not a swear word, so it's safe almost anywhere informal.

1. ¡No manches! ¿De verdad ganaste el sorteo? *(No way! Did you really win the raffle?)*
2. No manches, se me olvidaron las llaves en la casa. *(No way, I forgot the keys at home.)*
3. Mi hermano me contó que se casa en diciembre y yo solo dije: «¡No manches!». *(My brother told me he's getting married in December and all I said was, 'No way!')*
4. ¿No manches que ya se acabó el mole? *(You're kidding — the mole is already gone?)*
5. ¡No manches! El tráfico estuvo terrible esta mañana. *(No way! Traffic was terrible this morning.)*
6. Si Fer ya habla inglés, ¡no manches, qué rápido aprende! *(If Fer already speaks English, no way, how fast he learns!)*
7. No manches, ¿cerraron el mercado tan temprano? *(No way, did they close the market that early?)*

27 · ¿A poco?

Really?? / No way, seriously?

Raíz: Two tiny words, one giant eyebrow raise. Poco comes from Latin paucus, 'little, few' — English paucity, a scarcity of something. So ¿a poco? is really asking, 'is it really only that little bit true?' Picture holding thumb and finger a millimetre apart: that much? It doubts the whole story in a single breath, and the rising voice does half the work.
Literal: To [so] little?
Conecta: Incredulous partner of ¡no manches! (#26); short for ¿a poco sí?, opposite of simón (#20).
Uso: Pure Mexican disbelief — say it with rising intonation when something sounds too good or too strange to be true. Friendly and very common; you'll hear it fifty times a day in Puebla.

1. ¿A poco sí te vas a Puebla en diciembre? *(Really? You're really going to Puebla in December?)*
2. ¿A poco ya aprendiste a decir eso en español? *(Really? You already learned to say that in Spanish?)*
3. Me dijo que Joni se comió todo el pan. ¿A poco? *(He told me Joni ate all the bread. Really?)*
4. ¿A poco no te gusta el mole poblano? *(Really? You don't like mole poblano?)*
5. ¿A poco vas a manejar hasta el aeropuerto de noche? *(Really? You're going to drive to the airport at night?)*
6. Ayer nevó en la montaña. ¿A poco? ¡Qué frío! *(It snowed in the mountains yesterday. Really? How cold!)*
7. ¿A poco creen que voy a pagar tanto por eso? *(Really? Do they think I'm going to pay that much for that?)*

28 · ¡Híjole!

Wow / jeez / oh no

Raíz: ¡Híjole! is a gasp with its edges sanded off. At its heart is hijo, 'son', from Latin filius — English filial, 'to do with sons and daughters'. It probably began as a gentler way of starting hijo de… and stopping before the rude part, with the soft -le tacked on like a cushion. The word now carries every surprise — shock, pity, delight — in one breath.
Literal: Little son! (a softened gasp)
Conecta: All-purpose gasp beside ¡qué bárbaro! (#21) and ¡chale! (#29); softer than ¡no manches! (#26).
Uso: The softest all-purpose exclamation — surprise, pity, fright, delight, all in one word. Safe with anyone, including older people and strangers; use it freely.

1. ¡Híjole! Se me hizo tarde para la clínica. *(Jeez! I'm running late for the clinic.)*
2. ¡Híjole, qué caro está todo en el mercado! *(Wow, everything at the market is so expensive!)*
3. ¡Híjole! No sabía que venía tanta gente a cenar. *(Oh no! I didn't know so many people were coming to dinner.)*
4. ¡Híjole, qué buen café me preparaste! *(Wow, what a great coffee you made me!)*
5. Se cayó el plato y se rompió. ¡Híjole! *(The plate fell and broke. Oh no!)*
6. ¡Híjole! Mañana tengo que levantarme a las cinco. *(Jeez! Tomorrow I have to get up at five.)*
7. ¡Híjole, qué susto me dio Joni cuando ladró! *(Jeez, what a scare Joni gave me when she barked!)*

29 · ¡Chale!

Aw man / come on

Raíz: Nobody quite knows where chale came from — it may come from Caló, the Romani-influenced slang of old Spain, or from chalet, but neither story is proven, so don't build on either. What matters is the sound: a flat little sigh that lands like a deflating balloon. It's the noise of a plan falling through, a price too high, a 'really?' you don't even need to finish.
Literal: No word-for-word build; a bare exclamation.
Conecta: Disappointment cousin of ¡híjole! (#28) and ¡qué gacho! (#31); milder than chingado (#69).
Uso: Street-level 'aw man' for bad luck or mild disbelief. Casual and a bit rough around the edges — great with friends, but skip it with a shopkeeper you just met.

1. ¡Chale! Se me acabó la batería del celular. *(Aw man! My phone battery died.)*
2. ¡Chale, qué mala suerte! Perdí el autobús. *(Aw man, what bad luck! I missed the bus.)*
3. ¡Chale! ¿En serio no hay más pan dulce? *(Come on! Seriously, there's no more pan dulce?)*
4. ¡Chale, qué feo estuvo el examen! *(Man, that exam was rough!)*
5. Llegué tarde y ya habían cerrado. ¡Chale! *(I arrived late and they'd already closed. Aw man!)*
6. ¡Chale! Me duele la espalda desde ayer. *(Ugh! My back has hurt since yesterday.)*
7. ¡Chale, qué gacho que no puedas venir! *(Aw man, that's too bad you can't come!)*

30 · ¡Qué chido!

That's awesome!

Raíz: Chido has no proven history, and that's the honest truth — guesses point to gitano slang or an old word like chiro, but nothing is settled, so there's no Latin root to hang it on. What is certain is the feeling: it arrived as pure street praise and stayed there. Say it and the picture is a grin, a thumbs-up, something landing exactly right.
Literal: How cool! (an exclamation of delight)
Conecta: Exclamation twin of está chido (#35) and está padre (#33); happy opposite of ¡qué gacho! (#31).
Uso: Warm, informal enthusiasm — the Mexican 'awesome!' Say it with friends and family when something delights you; it's cheerful, never rude.

1. ¡Qué chido! Por fin llegó tu paquete. *(Awesome! Your package finally arrived.)*
2. ¡Qué chido que viniste a visitarnos! *(How awesome that you came to visit us!)*
3. ¡Qué chido está tu sombrero nuevo! *(Your new hat is so cool!)*
4. ¡Qué chido! Ganamos el partido en el último minuto. *(Awesome! We won the game in the last minute.)*
5. ¡Qué chido! ¿Vas a llevar a Fer a la lucha libre? *(That's awesome! Are you taking Fer to the lucha libre?)*
6. ¡Qué chido! Me regalaron entradas para el concierto. *(Awesome! They gave me tickets for the concert.)*
7. ¡Qué chido que ya se te quitó el dolor de espalda! *(That's great that your back pain is already gone!)*

31 · ¡Qué gacho!

That's awful!

Raíz: Gacho in older Spanish means bent over, drooping low — a plant wilting, shoulders sagging under bad news. No Latin root is proven for the slang sense, so the image does the work, not the etymology. A gacho day is one that bends you down a little. That's why it fits bad news so well: you can almost see the droop in the word.
Literal: How bent — how low!
Conecta: Sad twin of ¡chale! (#29) and ¡híjole! (#28); unhappy opposite of ¡qué chido! (#30).
Uso: Informal sympathy for bad news — the Mexican 'that's awful!' or 'what a bummer!' Fine with friends and family; keep it out of formal settings.

1. ¡Qué gacho! Se canceló el vuelo. *(That's awful! The flight got cancelled.)*
2. ¡Qué gacho que te robaron la bicicleta! *(How awful that they stole your bike!)*
3. ¡Qué gacho! Me enfermé justo antes del viaje. *(That's awful! I got sick right before the trip.)*
4. ¡Qué gacho! El restaurante estaba cerrado. *(What a bummer! The restaurant was closed.)*
5. ¡Qué gacho que no pudiste venir a la fiesta! *(That's too bad you couldn't come to the party!)*
6. ¡Qué gacho! Se me rompió el celular en la calle. *(That's awful! I broke my phone on the street.)*
7. ¡Qué gacho! Perdimos por un gol en el último minuto. *(How awful! We lost by one goal in the last minute.)*

32 · ¡Está cañón!

That's intense / difficult / crazy

Raíz: Start with a reed. Cañón comes from Latin canna, a hollow tube — the same root as English cane and cannon, and canyon, a great hollow cut in the rock. A cannon is big, loud, and hard to handle, and Mexican Spanish borrowed that weight for anything oversized: a job that's brutally hard, a price that's huge, a story that's wild. If it hits like a cannon, está cañón.
Literal: It's cannon! (it's huge, intense, hard)
Conecta: Intensity cousin of está padrísimo (#34); clean twin of está de poca madre (#64).
Uso: A flexible intensifier: hard, wild, amazing, or shocking, depending on tone. Very common and casual — use it with friends when something is a lot, in any direction.

1. ¡Está cañón! Subir esa montaña con tanto calor es durísimo. *(That's intense! Climbing that mountain in this heat is really tough.)*
2. ¡Está cañón el tráfico hoy! *(Traffic today is crazy!)*
3. El examen estuvo cañón, casi no lo termino. *(The exam was brutal; I barely finished it.)*
4. ¡Está cañón! ¿Viste qué rápido maneja ese camión? *(That's crazy! Did you see how fast that truck drives?)*
5. Aprender español está cañón, pero me encanta. *(Learning Spanish is tough, but I love it.)*
6. ¡Qué cañón estuvo la fiesta anoche! *(How wild the party was last night!)*
7. Estaría cañón manejar toda la noche sin dormir. *(It would be crazy to drive all night without sleeping.)*

33 · Está padre

It's nice / cool

Raíz: Padre is simply 'father', from Latin pater — English paternal and patron both live in the same family. Somewhere along the way, Mexican Spanish turned fatherly approval into a general stamp of quality: if it's padre, it's solid, good, worth a nod, the way English calls something 'daddy' when it's impressively big. The warmth of the word never quite left, which is why it still sounds friendly, not formal.
Literal: It's father(ly) — it's great.
Conecta: Cool-word family with está padrísimo (#34) and está chido (#35).
Uso: The standard Mexican 'nice / cool' — the most neutral of the praise words. Use it anywhere informal: about food, places, plans, or people.

1. Está padre tu casa, tiene mucha luz. *(Your house is nice; it gets a lot of light.)*
2. El mercado está padre, venden de todo. *(The market is cool; they sell everything.)*
3. Está padre que vengan Cielo y Fer en diciembre. *(It's great that Cielo and Fer are coming in December.)*
4. Ese restaurante está padre, pero es un poco caro. *(That restaurant is nice, but it's a bit pricey.)*
5. Estuvo padre la caminata con Joni esta mañana. *(The walk with Joni this morning was lovely.)*
6. ¿Está padre el hotel donde se van a quedar? *(Is the hotel where you're staying nice?)*
7. Estaría padre ir a la playa en Huatulco. *(It would be great to go to the beach in Huatulco.)*

34 · Está padrísimo

It's really cool

Raíz: Take padre, 'father', from Latin pater — English paternal — and crank it to the top with -ísimo, Spanish's 'most of all' ending. Padre already means 'great'; padrísimo means 'the greatest, the coolest there is', with no room left above it. It's the word you reach for when padre feels too small for the food, the view, or the plan in front of you.
Literal: It's the most father(ly) — the coolest.
Conecta: Superlative of está padre (#33), stronger than está chido (#35).
Uso: The enthusiastic superlative — 'really cool!' or 'amazing!' Use it when padre isn't strong enough; still perfectly polite and widely used.

1. ¡Está padrísimo el jardín de tu abuela! *(Your grandma's garden is amazing!)*
2. El concierto estuvo padrísimo, cantaron todas mis canciones. *(The concert was fantastic; they sang all my songs.)*
3. Está padrísimo que por fin te dieron el trabajo. *(It's awesome that they finally gave you the job.)*
4. La vista desde el hotel está padrísima. *(The view from the hotel is gorgeous.)*
5. Estuvo padrísimo el día en la playa con los niños. *(The day at the beach with the kids was wonderful.)*
6. ¡Qué padrísimo está tu coche nuevo! *(Your new car is so cool!)*
7. Estaría padrísimo pasar Navidad en Puebla con toda la familia. *(It would be amazing to spend Christmas in Puebla with the whole family.)*

35 · Está chido

It's cool

Raíz: Like its exclamation twin ¡qué chido!, chido has no proven origin — guesses about gitano slang or an old word like chiro are just guesses, with no Latin root to trace. So forget the dictionary and keep the feeling: it's the everyday street version of 'cool', a little looser than está padre, a little younger-sounding, and always a thumbs-up.
Literal: It's cool. (everyday street praise)
Conecta: Everyday form of ¡qué chido! (#30); casual cousin of está padre (#33).
Uso: Everyday casual 'cool' — slightly more street-flavoured than está padre, but just as friendly. A safe default with friends, family, and younger people.

1. Está chido tu reloj, ¿dónde lo compraste? *(Your watch is cool; where did you buy it?)*
2. El parque está chido para caminar con Joni. *(The park is great for walking Joni.)*
3. Está chido que hables español con tus pacientes. *(It's cool that you speak Spanish with your patients.)*
4. Esa película estuvo chida, me gustó mucho. *(That movie was cool; I liked it a lot.)*
5. ¿Está chido el café de ese lugar? *(Is the coffee at that place any good?)*
6. Estaría chido ir al mercado temprano mañana. *(It would be nice to go to the market early tomorrow.)*
7. El plan está chido, ¿qué te parece si salimos a las nueve? *(The plan is good; what do you think about leaving at nine?)*

36 · A toda madre

It's awesome / great

Raíz: Madre is 'mother', from Latin mater — English maternal, mother — and toda means 'all, whole'. Put them together and you get praise with the volume turned all the way up: not just good, but all-mother good. Madre carries real punch in Mexican swearing; among friends, though, it's warm and open, a superlative built on the most familiar word there is.
Literal: At full mother — totally awesome.
Conecta: Top-strength praise beside está de poca madre (#64); stronger than está padrísimo (#34).
Uso: It has a vulgar origin — madre is the same root as the swearing in #64 and #70 — but it's used openly and warmly among friends. Fine with people you trust; not with strangers or in formal settings.

1. ¡La fiesta estuvo a toda madre! *(The party was awesome!)*
2. Ese restaurante está a toda madre, la comida es buenísima. *(That restaurant is fantastic; the food is excellent.)*
3. El viaje a Puebla va a estar a toda madre. *(The trip to Puebla is going to be great.)*
4. ¡Qué a toda madre está tu casa nueva! *(Your new house is so awesome!)*
5. La carne asada quedó a toda madre. *(The barbecue turned out great.)*
6. Estaría a toda madre irnos de vacaciones todos juntos. *(It would be awesome to all go on vacation together.)*
7. Ese concierto estuvo a toda madre, no me lo quería perder. *(That concert was amazing; I didn't want to miss it.)*

37 · Qué hueva

What a drag / how lazy

Raíz: Hueva is fish roe — a clump of eggs — from the same family as huevo, 'egg', from Latin ovum, the root of English ovum and oval. Picture an egg just sitting there in the nest, heavy, still, going nowhere fast. That's the feeling Mexican Spanish borrowed: a thick, sluggish laziness that makes even standing up feel like too much work. Qué hueva is that sigh, out loud.
Literal: What [an] egg! (what laziness!)
Conecta: Laziness opposite of echarle ganas (#42) and al tiro (#49).
Uso: Casual and very Mexican — say it when you can't be bothered, or about a boring task. Playful among friends; don't use it to describe your boss's assignment at work.

1. ¡Qué hueva! No quiero levantarme tan temprano. *(What a drag! I don't want to get up that early.)*
2. Me da una hueva enorme lavar los platos. *(Washing the dishes feels like such a drag.)*
3. ¡Qué hueva estudiar hoy, mejor mañana! *(What a drag to study today — better tomorrow!)*
4. Tengo una hueva que no me puedo ni mover del sofá. *(I'm so lazy I can't even get off the couch.)*
5. ¡Qué hueva! El tráfico no avanza nada. *(What a drag! The traffic isn't moving at all.)*
6. Ayer me dio hueva ir al gimnasio y me quedé en casa. *(Yesterday I couldn't be bothered to go to the gym, so I stayed home.)*
7. ¡Qué hueva levantarse con este frío! *(What a drag to get up in this cold!)*

Chapter 4

Money, work & daily life

Expressions 38–51

38 · Lana

Money

Raíz: Lana is wool — the soft fleece off a sheep — from Latin lana, the root of English lanolin, the oil in wool. Wool was once wealth you could shear, bundle, and sell, so the word drifted from fleece to cash, the way English 'dough' travelled from bread to money. Say lana in a market and everyone knows you mean the folded bills in your pocket, not a sweater.
Literal: Wool — the everyday word for cash.
Conecta: Money word beside ¿en cuánto me lo dejas? (#39).
Uso: The everyday word for cash in Mexico — you'll hear it constantly at markets and tianguis. Casual but not rude; fine with vendors and friends alike.

1. No traigo lana, ¿me prestas cien pesos? *(I don't have any cash on me; can you lend me a hundred pesos?)*
2. Necesito juntar lana para el viaje a Puebla. *(I need to save up money for the trip to Puebla.)*
3. ¿Cuánta lana te costó el sombrero? *(How much money did the hat cost you?)*
4. Ando corto de lana este mes. *(I'm short on cash this month.)*
5. Si tuviera más lana, me compraría ese coche. *(If I had more money, I'd buy that car.)*
6. Guardé la lana en la cartera antes de salir. *(I put the money in my wallet before leaving.)*
7. No gastes toda la lana en el mercado. *(Don't spend all the money at the market.)*

39 · ¿En cuánto me lo dejas?

What's your best price?

Raíz: It's a negotiation in miniature. Cuánto comes from Latin quantus, 'how much' — English quantity — and dejar, 'to leave or let go', comes from Latin laxare, 'to loosen', the root of English relax and lax. You're asking the seller to loosen the price and leave the thing with you — a question that is really the first friendly tug in the haggle.
Literal: At how much do you leave it [to] me?
Conecta: Market partner of lana (#38), the money you haggle over; polite opener before sale (#9).
Uso: The standard friendly haggle in Mexican markets — polite, expected, and part of the fun. Say it with a smile; nobody is offended, and a deal often follows.

1. ¿En cuánto me lo dejas, jefe? Me llevo dos. *(What's your best price, boss? I'll take two.)*
2. ¿En cuánto me lo dejas si pago en efectivo? *(What's your best price if I pay cash?)*
3. Me gustó la blusa. ¿En cuánto me la dejas? *(I liked the blouse. What's your best price for it?)*
4. ¿En cuánto me lo dejas? En la otra tienda está más barato. *(What's your best price? It's cheaper at the other shop.)*
5. ¿En cuánto me los dejas, los tres sombreros? *(What's your best price for all three hats?)*
6. ¿En cuánto me lo dejarías si vuelvo mañana? *(What price would you give me if I come back tomorrow?)*
7. ¿En cuánto me lo dejas, señora? Es para un regalo. *(What's your best price, ma'am? It's a gift.)*

40 · Chamba

Job / work

Raíz: Nobody knows for certain where chamba came from — it may come from an old Portuguese word for a chamber, or from Caló slang, but no story is proven and there's no Latin root to trace. And it hardly matters: chamba is simply the word Mexico reaches for when it means work. It's proof that a word doesn't need a fancy pedigree to become indispensable.
Literal: Work — a job, everyday and casual.
Conecta: Work noun beside jalar (#41), the verb for doing it; what echarle ganas (#42) fuels.
Uso: The normal casual word for a job in Mexico — you'll hear 'ando buscando chamba' everywhere. Friendly and everyday; use it with anyone in conversation.

1. Ando buscando chamba desde hace un mes. *(I've been looking for work for a month.)*
2. ¿Dónde está tu chamba? ¿Cerca de la casa? *(Where's your job? Near home?)*
3. Mi chamba me deja poco tiempo libre. *(My job leaves me little free time.)*
4. Conseguí una chamba nueva en la clínica. *(I got a new job at the clinic.)*
5. Si pierdo la chamba, no sé qué voy a hacer. *(If I lose my job, I don't know what I'll do.)*
6. La chamba estuvo pesada hoy, llegué agotado. *(Work was tough today; I got home wiped out.)*
7. ¿Te gusta tu chamba o quieres cambiar? *(Do you like your job, or do you want to change?)*

41 · Jalar

To work / to be in / to pull

Raíz: Jalar comes from halar, 'to pull or drag', a word with Germanic roots — a close cousin of English haul. Pulling is physical, and Mexican Spanish stretched it in every direction: pull at a job and you're working; pull someone along and they're joining in; pull your weight and the machine — or you — is running properly. Ask ¿jalas? and you're really asking, 'will you pull with me?'
Literal: To pull. (to work, to join in)
Conecta: Pull-verb partner of chamba (#40); broken-machine sense is the opposite of al tiro (#49).
Uso: A do-everything verb: to work, to agree to join in, to pull, or (of a machine) to run. Very casual — use it with friends; '¿jalas?' is the classic way to ask 'are you in?'

1. ¿Jalas a ir al mercado conmigo? *(Are you in for going to the market with me?)*
2. No jala el elevador, hay que subir por las escaleras. *(The elevator doesn't work; we have to take the stairs.)*
3. Jalo en la clínica de lunes a viernes. *(I work at the clinic Monday to Friday.)*
4. ¿Jalas o te rajas? *(Are you in, or are you backing out?)*
5. Jala la cuerda más fuerte, que no se suelta. *(Pull the rope harder so it doesn't come loose.)*
6. Si jalas conmigo, terminamos más rápido. *(If you work with me, we'll finish faster.)*
7. El coche no jala, creo que se acabó la gasolina. *(The car won't start; I think it's out of gas.)*

42 · Echarle ganas

To put in effort

Raíz: Echar means 'to throw', from Latin iactare — English eject and jet come from the same throwing family. Ganas is the tricky half: its origin is uncertain, with no agreed Latin root, so take it as it is — appetite, desire, hunger to do something. Put them together and you throw your whole appetite at the task, the way you'd throw a shoulder into a heavy door.
Literal: To throw desire [at it].
Conecta: Effort phrase beside chamba (#40) and jalar (#41); the antidote to qué hueva (#37).
Uso: Warm encouragement, not a scolding — 'give it your best!' Say it to friends, family, and kids, or about your own Spanish practice. Always kind in tone.

1. Échale ganas, ya mero terminas el curso. *(Keep at it, you're almost done with the course.)*
2. Le eché muchas ganas a mi español este año. *(I put a lot of effort into my Spanish this year.)*
3. Si le echas ganas, vas a aprender rápido. *(If you put in the effort, you'll learn fast.)*
4. Hay que echarle ganas al trabajo, aunque esté pesado. *(We have to give it our all at work, even when it's tough.)*
5. Le echaba ganas todos los días para llegar a tiempo. *(He gave it his all every day to arrive on time.)*
6. Échenle ganas, equipo, que ya casi ganamos. *(Give it your all, team, we're almost winning.)*
7. Le echaría más ganas si tuviera más tiempo libre. *(I'd put in more effort if I had more free time.)*

43 · Cotorrear

To chat / hang out

Raíz: Cotorrear comes from cotorra, a parrot — a word that imitates the bird's own chatter. Parrots talk nonstop, loudly, happily, and for a very long time, and that's exactly the picture: friends talking the way parrots do, with no agenda and no hurry. It's not a meeting or a debate, just the pleasure of voices going back and forth.
Literal: To parrot — to chatter and hang out.
Conecta: Chat verb beside echar relajo (#44), its rowdier cousin; relaxed opposite of echarle ganas (#42).
Uso: Relaxed, friendly hanging out and chatting — the Mexican 'to hang out'. Use it with friends and family; it always sounds warm, never formal.

1. Vamos a cotorrear un rato en la plaza. *(Let's hang out and chat for a while in the plaza.)*
2. Estuvimos cotorreando toda la tarde con Cielo. *(We spent the whole afternoon chatting with Cielo.)*
3. ¿Quieres cotorrear o ya te vas a dormir? *(Do you want to hang out, or are you going to bed already?)*
4. Me gusta cotorrear con mis cuates los fines de semana. *(I like hanging out with my buddies on weekends.)*
5. Cotorreábamos en el mercado mientras comprábamos pan dulce. *(We were chatting at the market while buying pan dulce.)*
6. Si cotorreas mucho, no vas a terminar la tarea. *(If you chat too much, you won't finish your homework.)*
7. Ayer cotorreé con Fer y me enseñó unas palabras nuevas. *(Yesterday I hung out with Fer and he taught me some new words.)*

44 · Echar relajo

To fool around / mess about

Raíz: Echar is 'to throw', from Latin iactare — English eject, jet — and relajo comes from relajar, 'to loosen or relax', from Latin relaxare, the root of English relax. Throwing looseness around is a perfect picture of fooling around: letting the rules go slack, the shoulders drop, the laughter spill out. It's relaxation as an activity, not a rest — the messier, louder cousin of just chilling.
Literal: To throw relaxation — to fool around.
Conecta: Playful cousin of cotorrear (#43); opposite of echarle ganas (#42); echar returns in (#51).
Uso: Playful fooling around — kids, friends, parties. Light and affectionate in tone; don't use it for serious misbehaviour, and don't say it to a teacher about class.

1. Los niños andaban echando relajo en el jardín. *(The kids were fooling around in the garden.)*
2. No eches relajo en clase, por favor. *(Don't mess around in class, please.)*
3. Ayer echamos relajo toda la noche en la fiesta. *(Yesterday we fooled around all night at the party.)*
4. ¿Vas a echar relajo o te vas a poner a trabajar? *(Are you going to mess around, or are you going to get to work?)*
5. Echábamos relajo en el recreo cuando éramos niños. *(We used to fool around at recess when we were kids.)*
6. Si sigues echando relajo, no vamos a terminar nunca. *(If you keep fooling around, we'll never finish.)*
7. Me encanta echar relajo con mis cuates los sábados. *(I love messing around with my buddies on Saturdays.)*

45 · Cruda

Hangover

Raíz: Crudo means 'raw, uncooked', from Latin crudus — English crude and raw share the same idea. A hangover feels exactly like that: unfinished, sore all over, like meat that never saw the fire or a wound that never closed. It's a brilliantly blunt image — no fancy medical word, just the feeling of waking up still raw from the night before.
Literal: Raw(ness) — the morning-after rawness.
Conecta: Morning-after word beside echarse un coyotito (#51), the cure; rough opposite of al tiro (#49).
Uso: The standard Mexican word for a hangover — everyone says it after a fiesta. Casual and sympathetic; fine with friends, but save the details for people you know well.

1. Ando crudo después de la fiesta de anoche. *(I'm hungover after last night's party.)*
2. Qué cruda tan horrible, no me puedo ni levantar. *(What a horrible hangover; I can't even get up.)*
3. Ayer tomé demasiado y hoy traigo una cruda terrible. *(I drank too much yesterday and today I have a terrible hangover.)*
4. ¿Te dio cruda con ese mezcal? *(Did that mezcal give you a hangover?)*
5. La cruda me duró todo el día, no pude trabajar. *(The hangover lasted all day; I couldn't work.)*
6. Si tomas agua antes de dormir, no te da tanta cruda. *(If you drink water before bed, you won't get such a bad hangover.)*
7. Andaba bien crudo en la mañana, pero ya se me quitó. *(I was really hungover this morning, but it's gone now.)*

46 · Ahorita

Right now / in a little while

Raíz: Ahora is 'now', from Latin hac hora, 'at this hour' — English hour is in the same family — and -ita is Spanish's little ending. It's Mexico's most famous trick word: sometimes it means right now, sometimes in a minute, sometimes in an hour, and the ending makes the wait sound smaller and friendlier. The only way to learn it is to watch what people actually do.
Literal: Little now. (now, soon, or just now)
Conecta: Time word beside al rato (#47), ya mero (#48) and luego luego (#50).
Uso: Mexico's most famous time word — it can mean right now, in a minute, in an hour, or just now, depending on tone and context. When in doubt, wait and watch what people do.

1. Ahorita voy, solo termino esto. *(I'll be right there, I'm just finishing this.)*
2. Ahorita regreso, voy a comprar pan. *(I'll be right back; I'm going to buy bread.)*
3. ¿Me ayudas ahorita? Es rápido. *(Can you help me right now? It's quick.)*
4. Ahorita mismo lo hago, no te preocupes. *(I'll do it right this minute, don't worry.)*
5. Llegó ahorita, hace como cinco minutos. *(He arrived just now, about five minutes ago.)*
6. Ahorita no puedo hablar, te llamo al rato. *(I can't talk right now; I'll call you later.)*
7. Ahorita que termine la lluvia, salimos a caminar. *(As soon as the rain stops, we'll go out for a walk.)*

47 · Al rato

Later / in a bit

Raíz: A rato is a spell of time, and rato likely comes from Latin raptus, 'a seized moment' — English rapt and rapture share the grabbing idea. A rato is time snatched in one handful: not a scheduled hour, just a bit. So al rato, 'in a little slice of time', promises something soon-ish without ever putting a clock on it — ten minutes or two hours, take your pick.
Literal: At [a] bit (of time).
Conecta: Later-word beside ahorita (#46), ya mero (#48) and luego luego (#50); looser than luego luego.
Uso: A gentle 'later' with no clock attached — it could be ten minutes or two hours. Use it to promise something soon-ish without committing to an exact time.

1. Te llamo al rato, estoy en la clínica. *(I'll call you later; I'm at the clinic.)*
2. Nos vemos al rato en la plaza. *(See you later at the plaza.)*
3. Al rato vamos por un café, ¿te late? *(Later we'll go for a coffee, sound good?)*
4. Al rato te cuento todo lo que pasó. *(I'll tell you everything that happened later.)*
5. Al rato que salga el sol, sacamos a Joni. *(Later, when the sun comes out, we'll take Joni out.)*
6. ¿Nos vemos al rato o mañana? *(Shall we meet later or tomorrow?)*
7. Al rato regreso, no tardo. *(I'll be back in a bit; I won't be long.)*

48 · Ya mero

Almost / soon

Raíz: Ya is 'already', and mero comes from Latin merus, 'pure, sheer, exact' — English mere and merely are its relatives. Ya mero is 'already purely': the moment is exactly, purely about to happen, with nothing left in between. It's the sound of food nearly ready, a friend nearly at the door, a job nearly done — the finish line so close you can taste it.
Literal: Already purely — almost there!
Conecta: Almost-word beside ahorita (#46) and al rato (#47); pair it with echarle ganas (#42).
Uso: Cheerful 'almost there!' — for arrivals, food nearly ready, or a task nearly done. Very common and warm; use it whenever something is about to happen.

1. Ya mero llegamos, falta como diez minutos. *(We're almost there; about ten minutes left.)*
2. Ya mero termino la tarea. *(I'm almost done with my homework.)*
3. ¿Ya mero está la comida? *(Is the food almost ready?)*
4. Ya mero es Navidad, ¡qué emoción! *(Christmas is almost here; how exciting!)*
5. Ya mero llegaba cuando se me ponchó la llanta. *(I was almost there when my tire went flat.)*
6. Ya mero, espérame tantito. *(Almost, wait for me just a sec.)*
7. Ya mero aprendes todo el español que necesitas. *(You'll soon learn all the Spanish you need.)*

49 · Al tiro

Alert / ready / right on it

Raíz: Tiro is the shot from tirar, 'to throw or shoot', and there's no proven Latin root behind it, so the image has to carry the meaning. Being al tiro is 'at the shot' — finger on the trigger, ready to fire the instant you're needed. It's the opposite of sleepy and slow: alert, switched on, on the ball, the state you want on a travel day or a busy morning.
Literal: At the shot — ready, alert.
Conecta: Readiness word beside luego luego (#50), its speed twin; opposite of qué hueva (#37).
Uso: Alert, ready, on the ball — say it about yourself or as a nudge to others ('¡pónganse al tiro!'). Casual and energetic; great for travel days and busy mornings.

1. Estoy al tiro, dime qué necesitas. *(I'm on it, tell me what you need.)*
2. Hay que estar al tiro en el aeropuerto, no hay que perder el vuelo. *(We have to stay sharp at the airport; we can't miss the flight.)*
3. ¡Pónganse al tiro, que ya vamos a salir! *(Get ready, we're about to leave!)*
4. La enfermera estuvo al tiro todo el turno. *(The nurse was on the ball all shift.)*
5. Si no estás al tiro, se te va el autobús. *(If you're not on your toes, you'll miss the bus.)*
6. Ando al tiro desde las seis de la mañana. *(I've been on the ball since six in the morning.)*
7. Estaría más al tiro si hubiera dormido mejor. *(I'd be sharper if I'd slept better.)*

50 · Luego luego

Right away

Raíz: Luego means 'then', from Latin loco, 'in place, then' — English local and location come from the same place-word. Saying 'then' twice doubles the urgency: not just then, but then-then, immediately, with no gap at all. It's the most urgent of Mexico's time words, the one you use when you're already jumping up to help or heading out the door.
Literal: Then then — right away.
Conecta: Fastest time word beside ahorita (#46) and al rato (#47).
Uso: The most urgent of the time words — 'right away, immediately'. Use it when there's genuinely no delay, like jumping up to help or leaving right now.

1. Luego luego te llamo, dame dos minutos. *(I'll call you right away; give me two minutes.)*
2. Llegó y luego luego se puso a trabajar. *(He arrived and got straight to work.)*
3. Luego luego voy, ya estoy saliendo. *(I'm coming right away; I'm already leaving.)*
4. Si llueve, luego luego nos metemos a la casa. *(If it rains, we'll go inside right away.)*
5. Luego luego que lo vi, supe que era él. *(The moment I saw him, I knew it was him.)*
6. ¡Luego luego, que se nos hace tarde! *(Right now, we're running late!)*
7. Luego luego después de comer, nos fuimos al mercado. *(Right after eating, we went to the market.)*

51 · Echarse un coyotito

To take a little nap

Raíz: You don't take a nap in Mexico, you throw yourself one — echar means to throw, from Latin iactare, the root of eject and jet. The thing you throw yourself is a coyotito, a little coyote: coyote comes from Nahuatl coyotl, and -ito shrinks it into something small and affectionate. A little coyote is the perfect picture of a short, curled-up nap.
Literal: To throw oneself a little coyote.
Conecta: Nap cure for cruda #45; echar returns in #42 and #44; -ito also softens #46.
Uso: A beloved, affectionate word for a short nap — Andrew already uses it. Casual and warm; say it at home or with family, not in a formal meeting.

1. Me voy a echar un coyotito antes de la cena. *(I'm going to take a little nap before dinner.)*
2. Después de comer, me eché un coyotito de media hora. *(After lunch, I took a half-hour nap.)*
3. ¿Te echas un coyotito conmigo en el sofá? *(Will you take a little nap with me on the couch?)*
4. Si no me echo un coyotito, no aguanto la tarde. *(If I don't take a little nap, I won't make it through the afternoon.)*
5. Se echaba un coyotito todos los días después del trabajo. *(He used to take a little nap every day after work.)*
6. Échate un coyotito, te va a hacer bien. *(Take a little nap; it'll do you good.)*
7. Me echaría un coyotito, pero tengo que ir a la clínica. *(I'd take a little nap, but I have to go to the clinic.)*

Chapter 5

People & relationships

Expressions 52–63

52 · Güey / wey

Dude / buddy

Raíz: Güey started life as buey, an ox — from Latin bos, the root of bovine and beef. In fast, casual speech the b- softened into a g- sound, and the animal meaning fell away entirely. What stayed was the warmth: calling a friend an ox sounds rough in English, but in Mexico it became the everyday way to say mate, pal, dude.
Literal: Dude — from buey, an ox.
Conecta: Universal address word; warmer labels are carnal #54, compa #56, and cuate #53.
Uso: Very common among friends in Mexico, especially younger people; use it only with people you know well — with strangers or older people it can sound rude.

1. ¿Qué onda, güey? ¿Vamos por unos tacos al rato? *(What's up, dude? Want to grab some tacos later?)*
2. ¡No manches, güey, qué suerte tienes! *(No way, dude, you're so lucky!)*
3. Ese güey me cayó muy bien desde el primer día. *(That dude made a great impression on me from day one.)*
4. ¿Viste lo que hizo el güey de la esquina? *(Did you see what that guy on the corner did?)*
5. Oye, wey, ¿me prestas tu cargador? *(Hey, dude, can you lend me your charger?)*
6. Los güeyes de la oficina se fueron de fiesta anoche. *(The guys from the office went out partying last night.)*
7. Si ese güey vuelve a llegar tarde, lo van a correr. *(If that guy shows up late again, they're going to fire him.)*

53 · Cuate

Buddy / friend

Raíz: Cuate comes from Nahuatl cóatl, meaning twin — the same word also meant snake, but here it is the twin that counts. A twin is someone who arrived beside you, so a cuate is a friend as close as a twin brother. There is no Latin root here at all: this is one of the many Nahuatl words Mexico kept and made its own.
Literal: Twin, meaning a close friend.
Conecta: Warmer than güey #52; compare carnal #54 and compa #56 for the other friend-words.
Uso: Warm and friendly, common among men and across ages in Mexico; fine with people you know well, too familiar for strangers or formal settings.

1. Mi cuate de la prepa vive ahora en Puebla. *(My buddy from high school lives in Puebla now.)*
2. ¿Vas a venir con tu cuate a la fiesta? *(Are you coming to the party with your buddy?)*
3. Ese cuate siempre me hace paro cuando lo necesito. *(That friend always helps me out when I need it.)*
4. Los cuates se juntaron a ver el partido en mi casa. *(The buddies got together to watch the game at my place.)*
5. Mi cuate y yo nos conocimos en el mercado. *(My buddy and I met at the market.)*
6. Si necesitas algo, pregúntale a mi cuate, él sabe. *(If you need anything, ask my buddy — he knows.)*
7. Qué bueno que viniste, cuate, te extrañaba. *(So glad you came, buddy, I missed you.)*

54 · Carnal

Bro / close friend

Raíz: Carnal comes from Latin carnalis, of the flesh, from caro, carnis — flesh — the root of carnal, carnivore, and incarnate. A carnal brother shares flesh and blood, so the word stretched beyond family: a friend so close he feels like a brother of the flesh. That blood tie is why it sounds warm, never casual.
Literal: Brother of the flesh, a bro.
Conecta: Warmer than cuate #53, closer than compa #56; the feminine form is carnala #55.
Uso: Very warm and familiar; use only with close male friends (or actual brothers) — it signals real closeness, not just acquaintance.

1. ¿Qué onda, carnal? ¿Ya llegaste a Puebla? *(What's up, bro? Did you get to Puebla already?)*
2. Mi carnal me prestó su coche para el viaje. *(My bro lent me his car for the trip.)*
3. Ese carnal es como un hermano para mí. *(That guy is like a brother to me.)*
4. Los carnales se quedaron platicando hasta las tres de la mañana. *(The bros stayed up talking until three in the morning.)*
5. Oye, carnal, ¿me ayudas a cargar estas cajas? *(Hey, bro, can you help me carry these boxes?)*
6. Mi carnal mayor vive en Guadalajara desde hace años. *(My older bro has lived in Guadalajara for years.)*
7. Si mi carnal dice que sí, nos vamos el viernes. *(If my bro says yes, we're leaving on Friday.)*

55 · Carnala

Close female friend

Raíz: Carnala is simply carnal shaped for a woman — same Latin root, carnalis, of the flesh, from caro, carnis, the root of carnal and carnivore. It carries the same blood-brother idea, now as a blood-sister: a female friend so close she counts as family. The -a ending does all the work, turning a brother-word into a sister-word.
Literal: Flesh-sister, a close female friend.
Conecta: Feminine partner of carnal #54; praise her with es buena onda #58, not chava #57.
Uso: Warm and affectionate; Andrew already plans to use it with Cielo — perfect for a trusted female friend, too familiar for strangers.

1. ¡Qué onda, carnala! ¿Cómo te fue en el viaje? *(What's up, carnala! How was your trip?)*
2. Mi carnala me mandó fotos de Puebla toda la semana. *(My carnala sent me photos of Puebla all week.)*
3. Esa carnala es de las personas más buena onda que conozco. *(That friend is one of the nicest people I know.)*
4. Las carnalas se fueron de compras al centro. *(The girlfriends went shopping downtown.)*
5. Oye, carnala, ¿me acompañas al mercado mañana? *(Hey, carnala, will you come with me to the market tomorrow?)*
6. Mi carnala y yo nos conocimos en un curso de inglés. *(My carnala and I met in an English class.)*
7. Si mi carnala no puede venir, nos vemos otro día. *(If my carnala can't come, we'll meet another day.)*

56 · Compa

Mate / buddy

Raíz: Compa is short for compadre, from Latin compater — co-father, the root of the English word compadre. A compadre was a godfather, and in Mexico godparents are real family, not a ceremony title. That bond was so close that compa loosened into a general word for a trusted mate, someone you can count on.
Literal: Co-father, a trusted male mate.
Conecta: Less intimate than carnal #54, more workaday than cuate #53; everyday like güey #52.
Uso: Friendly and common all over Mexico, especially among men; fine with coworkers and acquaintances, warmer than just using someone's name.

1. ¿Qué onda, compa? ¿Vamos por un café? *(What's up, mate? Want to grab a coffee?)*
2. Mi compa del trabajo me invitó a su casa el domingo. *(My work buddy invited me to his place on Sunday.)*
3. Ese compa siempre anda de buen humor. *(That mate is always in a good mood.)*
4. Los compas se juntaron a jugar fútbol en el parque. *(The mates got together to play soccer in the park.)*
5. Oye, compa, ¿me echas una mano con esto? *(Hey, mate, can you give me a hand with this?)*
6. Mi compa y yo estudiamos juntos en la universidad. *(My mate and I studied together at university.)*
7. Si el compa no llega a tiempo, empezamos sin él. *(If our mate doesn't arrive on time, we'll start without him.)*

57 · Chavo / chava

Young guy / young woman

Raíz: Nobody knows for sure where chavo comes from — the best guess is Caló, the Spanish Romani language, where chavó meant boy or son, but no Latin root is documented, so this one stays parts-only. Whatever its birth, the picture is clear: a chavo is a young person, and the word sounds friendly and everyday, never stiff.
Literal: A young guy or young woman.
Conecta: For people you don't know well; for close friends use cuate #53 or carnal #54.
Uso: Everyday and neutral in Mexico for anyone roughly teens to thirties; friendly, not rude, but don't use it for clearly older adults.

1. El chavo de la tienda me ayudó a encontrar el mole. *(The young guy at the store helped me find the mole.)*
2. ¿Conoces a esa chava? Es la hija de mi vecina. *(Do you know that young woman? She's my neighbor's daughter.)*
3. Los chavos del barrio juegan fútbol todas las tardes. *(The neighborhood kids play soccer every afternoon.)*
4. La chava que atiende en el café es súper amable. *(The young woman who works at the café is super friendly.)*
5. Ese chavo llegó tarde a la clase otra vez. *(That young guy was late to class again.)*
6. Cuando era chavo, vivía en un pueblo chiquito. *(When I was a young guy, I lived in a tiny town.)*
7. Las chavas se fueron de compras y vuelven al rato. *(The girls went shopping and will be back in a bit.)*

58 · Es buena onda

He/she is a nice, chill person

Raíz: Onda is a wave, from Latin unda — the root of undulate, inundate, and abundant — the same wave you ask about in ¿qué onda? #1. A person with a good wave gives off good vibrations, the way a wave rolls toward you and lifts you. So es buena onda is about the feeling someone brings into a room.
Literal: He/she is of good wave.
Conecta: Positive twin of es mala onda #59; for things use está chido #35.
Uso: Very common and warm; use it freely about people you like — it's one of the safest compliments in Mexican Spanish.

1. Mi vecina es buena onda, siempre me saluda con una sonrisa. *(My neighbor is a really nice person; she always greets me with a smile.)*
2. ¿El nuevo doctor? Es buena onda, te va a caer bien. *(The new doctor? He's a nice guy, you'll like him.)*
3. La maestra de William era buena onda con todos los niños. *(William's teacher was lovely with all the kids.)*
4. Esos chavos son buena onda, nos invitaron a comer. *(Those guys are really nice; they invited us to eat.)*
5. Mi suegra es buena onda, nos llevamos muy bien. *(My mother-in-law is a sweetheart; we get along really well.)*
6. El señor del mercado es buena onda, siempre me da pilón. *(The man at the market is a nice guy; he always throws in a little extra.)*
7. Si es buena onda, seguro nos ayuda con la mudanza. *(If he's a good guy, he'll surely help us with the move.)*

59 · Es mala onda

He/she is a jerk / bad vibes

Raíz: Mala comes from Latin malus, bad — the root of malice and malfunction — and onda is a wave, from Latin unda, the root of undulate. Put them together and you get a bad wave rolling off a person: bad energy you can feel before they even speak. It is the exact opposite of a good wave, and just as hard to fake.
Literal: He/she is of bad wave.
Conecta: Negative twin of es buena onda #58; that person earns me cae gordo #25.
Uso: Mild to moderate insult about character; fine among friends talking about someone else, but don't say it to the person's face.

1. Ese jefe es mala onda, grita a todos en la oficina. *(That boss is a jerk; he yells at everyone in the office.)*
2. No me cae bien, es mala onda con los meseros. *(I don't like him; he's rude to the waiters.)*
3. La vecina era mala onda, nunca saludaba a nadie. *(The neighbor was a nasty piece of work; she never greeted anyone.)*
4. Mi ex era mala onda, siempre llegaba tarde y no avisaba. *(My ex was a jerk; he was always late and never said anything.)*
5. Esos tipos son mala onda, mejor ni les hables. *(Those guys are bad news; better not to even talk to them.)*
6. Fue mala onda que no me invitaran a la fiesta. *(It was mean of them not to invite me to the party.)*
7. Si es mala onda con su familia, imagínate con los demás. *(If he's nasty to his own family, imagine how he is with everyone else.)*

60 · Es bien codo

He's really stingy

Raíz: Codo is an elbow, from Latin cubitus — the root of cubit, the old elbow-length measure. The joke is physical: a stingy person keeps their elbows glued to their sides, so nothing — especially money — can slip out of their hands. It is a funny image, not a medical one, and that is why it lands as teasing rather than an insult.
Literal: He is really an elbow.
Conecta: A codo friend is rarely buena onda #58; pair with lana #38.
Uso: Playful and light, not a serious insult; fine as a joke among friends and family, but don't use it with a boss or someone you barely know.

1. Mi tío es bien codo, nunca invita ni un café. *(My uncle is really stingy; he never even treats anyone to a coffee.)*
2. Ese señor es bien codo, regatea hasta por un peso. *(That man is so cheap; he haggles over even one peso.)*
3. Era bien codo de joven, guardaba todo su dinero. *(He was really tight-fisted when he was young; he saved every peso.)*
4. No seas codo, ponle para las cervezas. *(Don't be cheap, chip in for the beers.)*
5. Los codos no sueltan ni un peso en la colecta. *(Stingy people won't give even a peso to the collection.)*
6. Mi jefe es bien codo con los aguinaldos. *(My boss is really stingy with the Christmas bonuses.)*
7. Si es bien codo, no esperes que pague la cena. *(If he's that stingy, don't expect him to pay for dinner.)*

61 · Fregar

To bother / mess up (¡No friegues! = No way!)

Raíz: Fregar comes from Latin fricare, to rub or scrub — the root of friction. Rub something too hard and you wear it down, so the verb stretched from scrubbing a pot to wearing a person down: bothering, breaking, ruining. One verb now covers every way of rubbing someone the wrong way, which is why it turns up everywhere.
Literal: To rub, bother, mess up.
Conecta: ¡No friegues! is cousin of ¡no manches! #26; breaking sense meets #70.
Uso: Informal and mild; ¡No friegues! is a friendly 'No way!' among friends, while fregar as 'to bother' is everyday — neither is vulgar, just casual.

1. ¡No friegues! ¿De verdad te ganaste el viaje? *(No way! Did you really win the trip?)*
2. Deja de fregarme, estoy tratando de concentrarme. *(Stop bugging me, I'm trying to concentrate.)*
3. El niño fregó el control remoto y ya no prende. *(The kid messed up the remote and now it won't turn on.)*
4. No me friegues con eso ahorita, por favor. *(Don't bother me with that right now, please.)*
5. Si sigues fregando, te vas a meter en problemas. *(If you keep messing around, you'll get into trouble.)*
6. Ayer me fregué la rodilla jugando fútbol. *(Yesterday I hurt my knee playing soccer.)*
7. ¡No friegues, güey, qué calor hace hoy! *(No way, dude, it's so hot today!)*

62 · Apapachar

To cuddle / comfort / pamper

Raíz: Apapachar is purely Mexican — it comes from Nahuatl patzoa, to squeeze or press softly, with the Nahuatl prefix a-, and it has no Latin root at all. The soft squeezing became the verb for hugging someone close and looking after them. The word itself sounds like what it means: gentle, warm, and a little bit like a pat.
Literal: To squeeze softly, to cuddle.
Conecta: Warmest verb here; what a buena onda #58 person does, opposite of #61.
Uso: Tender and affectionate, used with family, partners, kids and close friends; a very Mexican word — using it will always earn you a smile.

1. Después de un día tan largo, solo quiero que me apapachen. *(After such a long day, I just want to be cuddled.)*
2. Mi abuela siempre nos apapachaba con chocolate caliente. *(My grandma always pampered us with hot chocolate.)*
3. Apapacha a tu hijo, se cayó y está llorando. *(Give your son a cuddle; he fell down and he's crying.)*
4. Cuando estoy triste, Angie me apapacha hasta que me siento mejor. *(When I'm sad, Angie cuddles me until I feel better.)*
5. El perrito se acurrucó para que lo apapacharan. *(The little dog curled up so they'd cuddle him.)*
6. Me apapacharon tanto en casa de mi tía que no quería irme. *(They pampered me so much at my aunt's house that I didn't want to leave.)*
7. Si te sientes mal, ven, te apapacho un rato. *(If you're feeling down, come here — I'll hold you for a bit.)*

63 · Caerle a alguien

To drop by / show up

Raíz: Caer comes from Latin cadere, to fall — the root of cadence, cascade, and accident. You fall by someone's place the way rain falls: suddenly, without a formal plan, just because you were nearby. The le is the person you land on, so caerle a alguien is a visit that happens the way a drop of rain happens.
Literal: To fall by on someone.
Conecta: Drop-by verb; pair with al rato #47, ahorita #46, and cotorrear #43.
Uso: Casual and friendly; it's an unannounced visit among friends and family, so use it only where dropping in uninvited is welcome.

1. Al rato le caigo a tu casa con unas cervezas. *(I'll drop by your place later with some beers.)*
2. ¿Le caemos a casa de mi tía el domingo? *(Shall we drop by my aunt's house on Sunday?)*
3. Ayer le cayeron unos amigos sin avisar. *(Yesterday some friends showed up without warning.)*
4. Si le caes al mercado, tráeme unos chiles. *(If you swing by the market, bring me some chiles.)*
5. Le caí a su oficina para felicitarlo por su cumpleaños. *(I dropped by his office to wish him happy birthday.)*
6. Nos cayó de sorpresa toda la familia en Navidad. *(The whole family showed up on us by surprise at Christmas.)*
7. Cáele cuando quieras, aquí siempre hay café. *(Drop by whenever you like; there's always coffee here.)*

Chapter 6

Vulgar expressions — recognize, don't produce

Expressions 64–75

RECONOCE, NO PRODUZCAS — RECOGNIZE ONLY. These expressions are vulgar or insulting. Learn them so you understand what you hear on the street — do not use them yourself.

64 · Está de poca madre

It's fucking awesome

Raíz: Poca comes from Latin paucus, little or few — the root of paucity — and madre from Latin mater, mother, the root of maternal. Read literally, 'of little mother' makes no sense, and that is the point: the power is not in poca, it is in madre, used here as a swearword. The phrase borrows a mother's name to make praise sound huge and street-tough.
Literal: It is of little mother.
Conecta: Vulgar twin of a toda madre #36; short form qué poca #75 means the opposite.
Uso: RECONOCER SOLAMENTE — recognize only, do not say this: young friends use it to praise something wildly, but it is vulgar — the madre is a swearword — and a foreigner saying it sounds crass, not cool.

1. ¡La fiesta estuvo de poca madre, no paramos de bailar! *(The party was fucking awesome; we didn't stop dancing!)*
2. Ese taco está de poca madre, tienes que probarlo. *(That taco is fucking amazing; you have to try it.)*
3. El concierto estuvo de poca madre, valió cada peso. *(The concert was fucking incredible; it was worth every peso.)*
4. La vista desde el cerro está de poca madre. *(The view from the hill is fucking amazing.)*
5. Ese mole está de poca madre, es el mejor que he probado. *(That mole is fucking delicious; it's the best I've ever tasted.)*
6. La película estuvo de poca madre, la tienes que ver. *(The movie was fucking awesome; you have to see it.)*
7. ¡No manches, está de poca madre este lugar! *(No way, this place is fucking awesome!)*

65 · Chingar

Versatile vulgar verb

Raíz: Nobody agrees where chingar comes from — no Latin root survives, so this one stays parts-only, and any neat etymology would be a guess. What is certain is its range: from one vulgar core it grew into to fuck, to break, to bother, to ruin, even to work hard. Learn it as Mexican Spanish's hardest-working swearword, not as a word with one tidy meaning.
Literal: To fuck, break, bother, ruin.
Conecta: Chapter root: chingado #69, está de la chingada #71, and pinche #66 all orbit it.
Uso: RECONOCER SOLAMENTE — recognize only, do not say this: it is the most versatile swearword in Mexican Spanish, used by everyone from teens to taxi drivers, but as a foreigner you will sound aggressive or crude using it — understand it, don't produce it.

1. ¡Ya no me chingues, déjame en paz! *(Stop fucking with me, leave me alone!)*
2. Se chingó la lavadora otra vez, no prende. *(The washing machine broke again; it won't turn on.)*
3. Me chingué la rodilla jugando fútbol ayer. *(I fucked up my knee playing soccer yesterday.)*
4. ¡Chinga tu madre! *(Fuck your mother!)*
5. No me chingues, ¿en serio perdiste las llaves? *(Don't fuck with me — did you seriously lose the keys?)*
6. Si sigues así, te vas a chingar el carro. *(If you keep going like that, you're going to wreck the car.)*
7. Nos chingamos todo el día trabajando bajo el sol. *(We busted our asses all day working under the sun.)*

66 · Pinche

Damn / fucking (intensifier)

Raíz: Pinche is another mystery: in older Spanish a pinche was a kitchen helper, from pinchar, to prick, from Latin pungere — the root of puncture and point. But the jump from kitchen helper to swearword is not documented anywhere, so don't trust a story that explains it neatly. Today it works as a rough intensifier stuck in front of a noun.
Literal: Damn, fucking — before a noun.
Conecta: Go-to intensifier before nouns; rides with chingar #65 and cabrón #67 constantly.
Uso: RECONOCER SOLAMENTE — recognize only, do not say this: extremely common among friends and working-class speakers, but it is a swearword — it makes anything sound angry or crude, and a foreigner using it just sounds rude.

1. ¡Qué pinche calor hace hoy, no se aguanta! *(What fucking heat today — it's unbearable!)*
2. Se me olvidó el pinche paraguas en el camión. *(I forgot the damn umbrella on the bus.)*
3. Ese pinche carro no arranca ni empujándolo. *(That damn car won't start even if you push it.)*
4. ¡Pinche suerte la mía, se me ponchó la llanta! *(Just my fucking luck — I got a flat tire!)*
5. No soporto a ese pinche vecino, siempre está gritando. *(I can't stand that damn neighbor; he's always yelling.)*
6. Me cobraron un pinche dineral por arreglar el teléfono. *(They charged me a fucking fortune to fix the phone.)*
7. ¡Ay, pinche chamaco, ya rompió otro vaso! *(Oh, that damn kid broke another glass!)*

67 · Cabrón

Dude / bastard / badass

Raíz: Cabrón starts with cabra, a she-goat, from Latin capra — the root of Capricorn and caprine — and the -ón ending makes it big and rough, a big male goat. A big goat became a cuckold, then a general insult, then, among close male friends, a kind of rough praise. One animal walked the whole road from farmyard to insult to compliment.
Literal: Big male goat — dude, bastard, badass.
Conecta: Tone decides: friendly with güey #52, insulting beside pendejo #68, admiring like #64.
Uso: RECONOCER SOLAMENTE — recognize only, do not say this: among close male friends it can be warm, but the same word is a serious insult elsewhere — tone and relationship decide, and a learner cannot reliably control either.

1. ¡Qué onda, cabrón! ¡Tanto tiempo sin verte! *(What's up, dude! Long time no see!)*
2. Ese cabrón me robó el lugar en la fila. *(That bastard stole my place in line.)*
3. El cabrón del examen estaba dificilísimo. *(That bastard of an exam was insanely hard.)*
4. Mi jefe es un cabrón, no nos deja salir temprano nunca. *(My boss is a bastard; he never lets us leave early.)*
5. ¡Eres un cabrón, güey, qué golazo metiste! *(You're a badass, dude — what a goal you scored!)*
6. No seas cabrón, ayúdame a cargar esto. *(Don't be an asshole, help me carry this.)*
7. Ese cabrón siempre se sale con la suya. *(That bastard always gets his way.)*

68 · Pendejo

Idiot / dumbass

Raíz: Pendejo has no agreed Latin path, so no root is claimed here — the honest part is its older sense, pubic hair. The insult grew out of that crude body-word, turning a private, embarrassing thing into a way to call someone an idiot. Knowing the older sense explains why it stings: it was never a gentle word, even before it meant fool.
Literal: Dumbass, idiot; older sense: pubic hair.
Conecta: Direct insult, unlike flexible cabrón #67; pairs with pinche #66 as pinche pendejo.
Uso: RECONOCER SOLAMENTE — recognize only, do not say this: a strong, direct insult — calling someone this to their face can start a fight; even joking use between friends is risky for a foreigner.

1. No seas pendejo, lee las instrucciones antes de armarlo. *(Don't be a dumbass, read the instructions before putting it together.)*
2. Ese pendejo me cerró el paso en la carretera. *(That idiot cut me off on the highway.)*
3. ¡Qué pendejo soy, dejé las llaves adentro del carro! *(What an idiot I am — I left the keys inside the car!)*
4. El pendejo del mesero nos trajo la cuenta equivocada. *(That dumbass waiter brought us the wrong bill.)*
5. No le hagas caso, es un pendejo que siempre está de malas. *(Don't pay attention to him, he's an idiot who's always in a bad mood.)*
6. ¡Pendejo! ¡Casi me atropellas con tu bici! *(Dumbass! You almost ran me over with your bike!)*
7. Si sigues de pendejo, te van a correr del trabajo. *(If you keep acting like an idiot, they're going to fire you.)*

69 · Chingado

Damn it

Raíz: Chingado is the past participle of chingar #65, whose origin is uncertain, with the -ado ending turning the vulgar verb into an adjective. A thing that has been chingado is damned, screwed, ruined — it has already taken the hit. That is why it works both as a frustrated outburst and as a rough adjective stuck before a noun.
Literal: Damned — fucked, screwed, or ruined.
Conecta: Participle of chingar #65; rides with cabrón #67, softens into está de la chingada #71.
Uso: RECONOCER SOLAMENTE — recognize only, do not say this: a frustrated outburst or a damn-it before a noun; it is vulgar, so even when you hear it fifty times a day, keep it out of your own mouth.

1. ¡Chingado! ¡Se me cayó el teléfono al agua! *(Damn it! I dropped my phone in the water!)*
2. ¡Ay, chingado, otra vez llegué tarde! *(Oh, damn it, I'm late again!)*
3. ¿Dónde está el chingado control de la tele? *(Where's the damn TV remote?)*
4. ¡Chingado cabrón, me asustaste! *(Damn it, man, you scared me!)*
5. No encuentro mi chingada cartera por ningún lado. *(I can't find my damn wallet anywhere.)*
6. ¡Chingado! ¡Se acabó la gasolina a mitad de la carretera! *(Damn it! We ran out of gas in the middle of the highway!)*
7. Ese chingado ruido no me dejó dormir en toda la noche. *(That damn noise didn't let me sleep all night.)*

70 · Valió madre

It's screwed / went to shit

Raíz: Valió comes from valer, to be worth, from Latin valere, to be strong or be worth — the root of value and valid. Madre comes from Latin mater, mother, the root of maternal. Literally 'it was worth mother' is nonsense; the sense is that the plan counted for nothing, and madre supplies the swearword charge that turns a failure into a curse.
Literal: It was worth mother — screwed.
Conecta: Ruined-plan cousin of #71; shrug it off with ya ni modo #5.
Uso: RECONOCER SOLAMENTE — recognize only, do not say this: the standard vulgar way to say something is ruined; everyone understands it, but the madre makes it a swearword, not something a visitor should repeat.

1. Se me cayó el pastel y valió madre la fiesta. *(I dropped the cake and the party went to shit.)*
2. Se ponchó la llanta y valió madre el viaje. *(The tire blew and the trip was screwed.)*
3. Valió madre, se me olvidó el pasaporte en la casa. *(Damn it, I left my passport at home.)*
4. Si se moja el teléfono, valió madre. *(If the phone gets wet, it's toast.)*
5. Valió madre el plan, empezó a llover a cántaros. *(The plan went to hell — it started pouring rain.)*
6. Me robaron la cartera y valió madre todo el día. *(Someone stole my wallet and the whole day went to shit.)*
7. Si no llega el dinero a tiempo, valió madre la renta. *(If the money doesn't arrive on time, the rent is screwed.)*

71 · Está de la chingada

It's fucking awful

Raíz: Chingada is the feminine participle of chingar #65, whose origin is uncertain. De la chingada means 'of the fucked-up place' — the worst place a thing can be, as if it had been sent somewhere ruined and left there. It is the same verb as chingado #69, stretched into a place-name for disaster.
Literal: It is of the fucked-up place.
Conecta: Awful twin of #64; ¡qué gacho! #31 is the clean way to say it.
Uso: RECONOCER SOLAMENTE — recognize only, do not say this: very vulgar — one of the strongest complaints in Mexican Spanish — and hearing it constantly does not make it safe for a foreigner to repeat.

1. El tráfico está de la chingada, llevamos una hora parados. *(The traffic is fucking awful; we've been stuck for an hour.)*
2. La comida del hospital está de la chingada, no se puede comer. *(The hospital food is fucking terrible; you can't eat it.)*
3. Mi rodilla está de la chingada desde la caída. *(My knee has been fucking awful since the fall.)*
4. El servicio en ese restaurante está de la chingada. *(The service at that restaurant is fucking terrible.)*
5. Hoy el clima está de la chingada, puro frío y lluvia. *(The weather today is fucking miserable — nothing but cold and rain.)*
6. El examen estuvo de la chingada, no entendí nada. *(The exam was fucking awful; I didn't understand a thing.)*
7. Está de la chingada que suban los precios otra vez. *(It's fucking awful that they're raising prices again.)*

72 · ¿Qué pedo?

What's up? / What the hell?

Raíz: Pedo comes from Latin peditum, a fart, from pedere, to fart — the root of petard, a little explosive that was named for the same sound. From fart it stretched to mean a fuss, a problem, or just what's going on. So ¿qué pedo? is literally asking 'what fart?', and the crude joke is exactly why it works as a greeting.
Literal: What fart? What's going on?
Conecta: Vulgar twin of ¿qué onda? #1 and ¡qué rollo! #13; its answer is #74.
Uso: RECONOCER SOLAMENTE — recognize only, do not say this: a greeting among young male friends and a complaint starter — but pedo literally means 'fart', so it is crude; greet people with ¿qué onda? (#1) instead.

1. ¿Qué pedo, güey? ¿Vamos al mercado o qué? *(What's up, dude? Are we going to the market or what?)*
2. ¿Qué pedo con este tráfico? ¡No avanzamos nada! *(What the hell is up with this traffic? We're not moving at all!)*
3. ¿Qué pedo contigo? Ayer no me contestaste. *(What's up with you? You didn't answer me yesterday.)*
4. Llegó y luego luego: ¿qué pedo, ya empezó la fiesta? *(He arrived and right away: what's up, has the party started?)*
5. ¿Qué pedo con el precio? ¡Está carísimo! *(What the hell is with the price? It's so expensive!)*
6. ¿Qué pedo, cabrón? ¡No te veía desde la prepa! *(What's up, man? I haven't seen you since high school!)*
7. ¿Qué pedo con ese ruido? No me deja dormir. *(What the hell is that noise? It won't let me sleep.)*

73 · Al chile

Honestly / for real

Raíz: Chile comes from Nahuatl chilli, chili pepper — and the phrase leans on chile as a crude slang word for the penis in Mexico, so speaking al chile is blunt, no-filter talk, hot and direct like the pepper itself. That one crude undertone is the whole edge of the phrase; the honesty sense comes from saying it straight, without softening.
Literal: To the chili — honestly, for real.
Conecta: Blunt cousin of ¡la neta! #15, the clean way to say 'honestly'.
Uso: RECONOCER SOLAMENTE — recognize only, do not say this: very common in central Mexico for 'honestly', but the chile carries a crude undertone — use ¡la neta! (#15) for the same meaning without the vulgar edge.

1. Al chile, no sé si voy a poder ir mañana. *(Honestly, I don't know if I'll be able to go tomorrow.)*
2. ¿Al chile? ¿De verdad te vas a mudar a Puebla? *(For real? Are you really moving to Puebla?)*
3. Al chile, ese taco es el mejor de todo el mercado. *(Honestly, that taco is the best in the whole market.)*
4. Te lo digo al chile, no me late ese plan. *(I'm telling you straight up, I'm not into that plan.)*
5. Al chile sí me enojé cuando no me avisaron. *(Honestly, I really did get angry when they didn't tell me.)*
6. ¿Me lo dices al chile o me estás cotorreando? *(Are you telling me for real, or are you messing with me?)*
7. Al chile, no traigo lana para salir esta noche. *(Honestly, I don't have money to go out tonight.)*

74 · No hay pedo

No problem (vulgar)

Raíz: Pedo comes from Latin peditum, a fart, from pedere, to fart — the root of petard. No hay pedo is literally 'there is no fart', meaning there is no fuss and no problem. It is the same root that drives ¿qué pedo? #72, its question form, so the pair fits together: a fart-question answered by a no-fart answer.
Literal: There is no fart — no problem.
Conecta: Vulgar twin of no hay bronca #12, the clean version; answers ¿qué pedo? #72.
Uso: RECONOCER SOLAMENTE — recognize only, do not say this: the vulgar version of 'no problem' — everyone will understand it, but no hay bronca (#12) says the same thing cleanly, so use that instead.

1. No hay pedo, yo te llevo al aeropuerto. *(No problem, I'll take you to the airport.)*
2. ¿Te molesta si llego tarde? — No hay pedo, no pasa nada. *("Do you mind if I'm late?" "No problem, it's fine.")*
3. No hay pedo, güey, lo arreglamos mañana. *(No worries, dude, we'll fix it tomorrow.)*
4. Perdón por el desmadre. — No hay pedo, así es la fiesta. *("Sorry about the mess." "No problem, that's how the party goes.")*
5. No hay pedo si no vienes, nos vemos otro día. *(No problem if you can't come; we'll see each other another day.)*
6. Se me rompió el vaso. — No hay pedo, era viejo. *("I broke the glass." "No worries, it was old.")*
7. No hay pedo, mañana lo resolvemos sin problema. *(No problem, we'll sort it out tomorrow.)*

75 · Qué poca

That's messed up

Raíz: Qué poca is short for qué poca madre #64: poca from Latin paucus, little or few, the root of paucity, and madre from Latin mater, mother, the root of maternal. Same words as the praise phrase, opposite meaning — clipping off madre leaves 'what little!' as outrage at how little decency or shame someone showed. Never mix the two up.
Literal: What little [mother]! That's messed up!
Conecta: Short form of #64, opposite meaning: praise there, outrage here; use #31 instead.
Uso: RECONOCER SOLAMENTE — recognize only, do not say this: it expresses real indignation at something unfair — hear it, understand the anger, but as a visitor it is safer to say ¡qué gacho! (#31) instead.

1. ¡Qué poca! Me dejó plantado dos horas en la esquina. *(That's messed up! He left me standing on the corner for two hours.)*
2. ¡Qué poca madre, güey! ¿Cómo le hiciste eso a tu hermano? *(That's so messed up, dude! How could you do that to your brother?)*
3. ¡Qué poca que no me invitaran a su boda! *(How messed up that they didn't invite me to their wedding!)*
4. Le robaron la bici y ni le ayudaron. ¡Qué poca! *(They stole his bike and nobody even helped him. How messed up!)*
5. ¡Qué poca madre que suban el precio sin avisar! *(That's so shitty of them to raise the price without warning!)*
6. ¡Qué poca! Se fue sin pagar la cuenta. *(That's messed up! He left without paying the bill.)*
7. ¡Qué poca que traten así a los abuelitos! *(How awful that they treat elderly people like that!)*