

Catholic Church Records: Deaths

Latin America “How to” Guide, Intermediate Level: Instruction

March 2016

GOAL

This guide will teach you how to extract the genealogical information from a Spanish death record by using key words and phrases.

INTRODUCTION

There are two common types of death records. If the deceased is a child or a young, unmarried person, the death record usually lists their parents. If the deceased was married, the record usually names the spouse (whether alive or deceased), and may name surviving children. The majority of the paragraph form Spanish death records follow a particular format, though they may slightly vary by location (i.e. Mexico or Peru).

You may want to consult the following “How to” Guides before continuing:

- [Reading Spanish Handwritten Records](#)
- [Inserting Special Characters](#)

HOW TO

Before you begin extracting genealogical information from documents written in Spanish, it is important to understand the endings of nouns and adjectives.

In Spanish, nouns and adjectives have either a masculine or a feminine ending. Masculine nouns and adjectives generally end in –o, while feminine nouns and adjectives generally end in –a. Additionally, articles have a masculine and feminine form. The articles must match the gender. Masculine nouns and adjectives generally use the article *el*, while the feminine nouns and adjectives use the article *la*. In baptism, marriage, and death records, you typically find the relationship indicators like *hijo* (child), *esposo* (spouse), or *viudo* (widower). These words usually describe the main person in the records. They reflect the pattern of masculine and feminine word endings, as the table below indicates:

Spanish	English	Spanish	English	Spanish	English
<i>el hijo</i>	the son	<i>el esposo</i>	the husband	<i>el viudo</i>	the widower
<i>la hija</i>	the daughter	<i>la esposa</i>	the wife	<i>la viuda</i>	the widow

This is an important distinction when trying to learn the sex of a person from the records, as most Spanish names have a male and female version. Sometimes it is difficult to distinguish the difference between a handwritten o or a. If you have a hard time reading the ending, the articles of the paragraph might also be able to help you distinguish the sex of the person.

Sample Paragraph Death Record

Nº 148.
Sete. 1861.
Antonio Gu-
illen, casado con
Rafaela Gomez.
adulto

¹ En el campo santo de la Parroquia de S. Mateo de
la Ciudad de Montemorelos ² a los veinte ochos dias ² del
mes de Setiembre de mil ochocientos sesenta y uno, El
Presb. D. Francisco Sabio Treviño, mi teniente, ³ dio sepul-
tura en un entierro y fabrica mayor a José Antonio
Guillen, ⁴ adulto, de cuarenta y cuatro ⁵ años de edad, ⁶ casado
que fue ⁶ con D.ª M.ª Rafaela Gomez, ⁷ a quien dejó viuda, ⁸ mu-
rió de fiebre en esta Ciudad, habiendo recibido antes los
S.º Sacramentos de Penitencia y Extrema Uncion, y el Amo.
Ciudad. Vico. Y para const.ª lo firmo.

Source: <https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:9Q97-YSGC-NBX> : accessed 30 March 2016.

Paragraph Death Record Outline in English


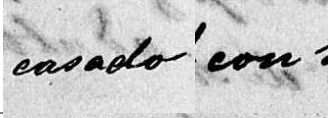
In the¹ (location information, including parish), on the² (day written out) of the month of² (month and year written out), (Information about the priest) gave ecclesiastical burial with funeral and ceremonies to³ (Name of deceased person) adult⁴ of (age written out) years of age⁵, married⁶ he was with⁶ (wife's name) whom he left widow⁷, he died of⁸ (cause of death) in (place of death), having received before the holy sacraments of penitence and last rites I the priest witness and sign this record.

Margins

As in the death record above, the decedent's name is often recorded in the margin. Sometimes the surname is not included with the name. Other times, relationships (such as spouse or father) and/or the place of death is recorded in the margin, which can be a very small geographic location like a village or a ranch. Keep in mind the name may be abbreviated (for example, M^a for María).

Key Words

The following key words will indicate the essential genealogical information. Depending on the context, the information may come before or after the key word. Note that the Spanish words and phrases are written in standardized Spanish. In some cases, the examples provided may differ in spelling, diacritics, or conjugation of the word. Keep in mind that phrases and even words may be split between two lines.

English	Spanish	Information given	Example
1. In the...	En el ...	<u>followed</u> by the name of the parish and town	
2. on the...of the month of...	a los...del mes de...	<u>between</u> these words will be the day written out <u>followed</u> by the month and year written out	
3. gave ecclesiastic al burial with funeral and ceremonies to...	Dio sepultura Eccla (ecclesiástica) con entierro y fabrica mayor a	<u>followed</u> by the name of the deceased	
4. adult	adulto	indicates whether the deceased is an adult or child	
5. ...years of age	...años de edad	<u>preceded</u> by the age of the deceased written out	
6. married ... with ...	casado ... con ...	<u>followed</u> by the name of the wife	
7. whom he left widow	a quien deja viuda	indicates whether the spouse is alive or deceased	
8. he died of...	murio de...	<u>followed</u> by the cause of death and place of death	


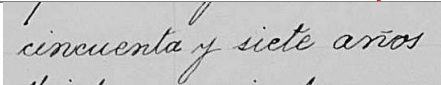
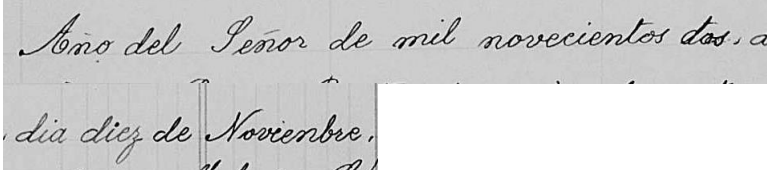
Other Helpful Vocabulary Words


Before the name of a specific place is mentioned, you will see a word describing the type of location (i.e. “village” or “city”). When recording a person died, the record may say “today,” “yesterday,” “of the same month,” or “of the same year,” instead of rewriting the date. .

town	pueblo
city	ciudad
resident	vecino de
birthplace	natural de
today	hoy
yesterday	ayer
days	días
months	meses
of the current month	del corriente/mismo mes
of the current year	del corriente/mismo año
Sir / Ma'am (honorific title indicating respect)	Don / Doña
deceased	finado/difunto
widowed	deja viudo(a)
widow / widower	viudo/viuda
wife	mujer/esposa
husband	marido/esposo
left a will	dejó testamento/testó
has died	ha fallecido/muerto

PRACTICE

The last page of this guide contains an image of a death record. You can also view the image on FamilySearch using by clicking [here](https://familysearch.org/wiki/en/Spanish_Genealogical_Word_List). Use the FamilySearch word list to complete this activity. https://familysearch.org/wiki/en/Spanish_Genealogical_Word_List

What is the name of the deceased?	Look for the key words ha fallecido....	 ha fallecido M Baldomero Tejeda
How old was he?	Look for the key words años after the deceased's name. His age will be written before the word.	 cincuenta y siete años (57 years old)
What is the death date?	Look in the first line.	 Año del Señor de mil novecientos dos día diez de Noviembre (10 Nov 1902)

<p>Bonus question: What was his wife's name?</p>	<p>Look for the key words casado con. His wife's name will follow.</p>	 <p>casado con Mercedes Cosiao</p>
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ACTIVITY

Now, test your skills you have learned in this “How to” Guide. The Activity is a way to check your knowledge and let you know you’ve mastered the Guide! [Click here](#) to try out the Activity.

M. Baldomero
Fajeda

Año del Señor de mil novecientos dos, día diez de Noviembre, Yo Ricardo F.
Reyes Cura Rector propio de esta Santa Iglesia Catedral de Arequipa
Certifico que ha fallecido M. Baldomero Fajeda natural y vecino de
esta de cincuenta y siete años casado con Mercedes Corisio testó ante el es-
crivano Fajeda. murió de neumonia doble su entierro de Cruz alta con fu-
nerales en Santo Domingo. y para que conste lo firmo.

Ricardo F. Reyes