



## NEBRASKA BY HEART

Folk Arts • Traditional Arts • Folklife  
Curriculum Unit • Grades 6–8  
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# Dichos (Spanish Sayings or Proverbs) with English Translations

### **A Dios rogando y con el mazo dando.**

*Praying to God and hitting with the hammer.* Covering all the bases. Doing everything necessary to ensure success.

### **A juventud ociosa, vejez trabajosa.**

*To leisurely youth, laborious old age.* If you are lazy now, you will have to work harder later.

### **A quien madruga, Dios le ayuda.**

*Who rises early, God helps.* God helps those who get started early.

### **Acabándose el dinero, se termina la amistad.**

*The money running out, the friendship ends.* Describes those who are your “friends” only as long as you have money.

### **Camarón que se duerme, se lo lleva la corriente.**

*Shrimp that sleeps, the current carries it away.* If you don’t stay alert to and act on opportunities, you will miss them. Similar to the English, “Snooze and you lose.”

### **Como el apóstol 13, come y desaparece.**

*Like the apostle 13, eats and leaves.* Describes guests who come only for the food, or people who stay only for the part of the event that benefits them.

### **Con virtud y bondad se adquiere autoridad.**

*With virtue and goodness authority is acquired.* People will be more likely to do what you say if they perceive you as being virtuous and kind.

### **De dinero y bondad, siempre la mitad.**

*Of money and goodness, always in the middle.* Your interests are better served by being motivated equally by goodness and money, rather than being motivated completely by one or the other.

### **De tal palo, tal astilla.**

*From such a stick, such a splinter.* The way a child behaves is a reflection of the way his or her parents behave. Similar to “The nut doesn’t fall far from the tree.”

**Del dicho al hecho, hay mucho trecho.**

*From the word to the deed, there is a great distance.* It is one thing to say something will be done, and quite a different thing to get it done.

**Despacio voy, porque de prisa estoy.**

*Slowly I go because I am in a hurry.* Proceeding methodically often gets faster and better results than rushing.

**Donde hay gana, hay maña.**

*Where there is the desire there is the ability.* If you really want to do something, you can find a way to do it. Similar to “Where there’s a will, there’s a way.” in English.

**El que nace pa’ tamal, del cielo le caen las hojas.**

*He who is born for tamal, from the sky the leaves fall on him.* For what you are born to do, your path will fall into place in front of you.

**El diablo sabe más por viejo que por diablo.**

*The Devil knows more because he is old than because he is the Devil.* Wisdom and knowledge increase with increasing age. (i.e., The Devil owes his knowledge more to his age than to any supernatural powers.)

**El mal escribano le echa la culpa a la pluma.**

*The poor writer places the blame on the pen.* People naturally blame their problems on something or someone else, rather than accept any responsibility themselves.

**El que da primero, da dos veces.**

*He who strikes first strikes twice.* Whoever is first has an advantage over all who come after.

**El que mucho habla, mucho yerra.**

*Who much speaks, much errs.* The more you talk, the more you will make mistakes.

**El que por su gusto corre, nunca se cansa.**

*Who for his pleasure runs, never tires.* When you do something for pleasure, it is not tiring.

**El que quiere baile, que pague músico.**

*Who wants dance, should pay musician.* The one who wants something done should be the one who takes the responsibility for making it happen.

**El que quita la ocasión, evita el ladrón.**

*Who takes away the opportunity, avoids the robber.* If you take precautions, you will avoid problems.

**En boca del mentiroso, lo cierto se hace dudoso.**

*In the mouth of a liar, what is certain becomes doubtful.* Once someone has been caught lying, it is hard to believe anything else that person says.

**Gato escaldo del agua fría huye.**

*A scalded cat from cold water runs.* People often draw the overly broad lessons from their experiences. (i.e., The cat should have learned only to avoid hot water.)

**Hazme las cuentas claras, y el chocolate espeso.**

*Make for me the accounts clear and the chocolate thick.* Whatever else might be confusing, the books had better be straightforward. A similar saying is “Las cuentas claras hacen buenos amigos.” (Clear accounting makes good friends.)

**Honra y dinero se ganan despacio y se pierden ligero.**

*Reputation and money are earned slowly and lost quickly.* Reputation and money are hard to earn and easy to lose.

**La mejor palabra es la que no se dice.**

*The best word is the one that is not said.* Sometimes, refraining from speaking is better than anything you could say.

**La palabra es plata, el silencio oro.**

*The word is silver, silence gold.* Silence is more valuable than words.

**Lo que bien se aprende, nunca se pierde.**

*What well is learned never is lost.* If you learn something well, you will never forget it.

**Más vale poco y bueno que mucho y malo.**

*It is worth more little and good than much and bad.* More is not always better. It is better to have less and happiness than more and misery.

**Mejor solo que mal acompañado.**

*Better alone than poorly accompanied.* It is better to be alone than to be with the wrong person.

**Nadie es profeta en su propia tierra.**

*No one is a prophet in his own land.* People place a higher value on exotic things and exotic people than on familiar ones or ones from close to home.

**No es más rico el que más tiene, sino el que menos necesita.**

*He is not richer who the most has, but who the least needs.* Someone who is satisfied with a small amount is richer than someone who is always craving more.

**No hay atajo sin trabajo.**

*There is no shortcut without work.* It takes work to avoid doing work.

**No hay curva mala pasándola despacio.**

*There is no bad curve, passing it slowly.* You can avoid mishaps by proceeding with caution.

**No tengas como vano el consejo del anciano.**

*Do not consider useless the advice of an old person.* Do not ignore the advice of someone who speaks from experience.

**Perro que no camina, no encuentra hueso.**

*Dog who doesn't walk, doesn't find a bone.* If you want something, you need to make efforts to get it.

**Poco a poco se anda lejos.**

*Little by little one goes far.* Frequent, small steps can accomplish the same result as (or better results than) a one-time Herculean effort.

**Por el árbol se conoce el fruto.**

*By the tree the fruit is known.* Children are very much like their parents.

**Querer es poder.**

*To want to is to be able to.* If you really want to do something, you will be able to do it.

**Quien con el lobo se junta a aullar aprende.**

*Who with the wolf associates, to howl learns.* A person can be judged by the company he or she keeps (i.e., by the people he or she hangs out with).

**Si quieres el perro, acepta las pulgas.**

*If you want the dog, accept the fleas.* If you wanted something, don't complain about it once you get it. Similar to the English saying "You have to take the bitter with the sweet."

**Una buena acción es la mejor oración.**

*A good deed is the best prayer.* One's faith is best expressed by one's actions.