

Learning Portuguese in English

Basics of the Portuguese Language



Pronunciation

- O Alfabeto – Learning the alphabet in Portuguese
- Sons típicos do português – Getting to know the sounds
- Accents and graphic symbols
- In-word Consonants – Variants of Pronunciation
- Numbers

The Alphabet

Uma ótima maneira de se aprender uma língua estrangeira é aprendendo como eles falam, como pronunciam as letras e palavras e se familiarizando com a pronúncia de sons típicos da língua.

A great way to start learning a foreign language is by learning *how* they speak, how they pronounce the letters and words, and become familiarized with pronunciations typical of the language.

The Alphabet

Letter	Pronunciation
A	Ah
B	Beh
C	Seh
D	Deh
E	Eh
F	Efee
G	Geh
H	Ah-gah
I	Ee
J	Gohtah (Like in Garage)
L	Ehlee
M	Ehmee

Letter	Pronunciation
N	Ehnee
O	Aww(like when something is cute, but not as slow)
P	Peh
Q	Keh
R	Eh-hee (the R sounds like H)
S	Ehsee
T	Teh
U	Oo
V	Veh
X	Shees
Z	Zeh

Os Importados – Foreign Letters

As letras K, W e Y não são letras comuns do alfabeto português. Fazem parte devido as palavras e nomes estrangeiras.

Não há palavras em português que começam ou que tenham qualquer uma dessas letras. Quando são usados será em nomes ou palavras de outras línguas adaptadas para o português.

The letters **K**, **W**, and **Y** are not common letters of the Portuguese alphabet. They are part of it because of foreign words, names, and pronunciations.

There are no portuguese words that begin with or have any of the letters above. Whenever they are used, it is either in a name or word from another language adapted to the Portuguese language.

Ex.: Kart, Kevin, Km (quilômetros), Kw (Kilowatt), William, Oswaldo (pronounced as a V), Yan, Yago, Taylor.

Sons Típicos – Combination of vowels

Like many languages when you are using two vowels to work together, one will lose its strength, becoming semi-vowels. Here are some examples

Typical sounds	Word examples	Pronunciations	Closest to English
Ai	Baixo	Letter I	High
Ei	Colmeia	Letter a	Way
Oi	Jiboia	Oy	“Ahoy”
Ão	São		
ães/ões	Cães/ balões		
Ch	Chuva	Sh	Shower
Ua	Água	Wa	Water
Nha	Galinha	Spanish ña	Niña
Nho	Pintinho	Spanish ño	Niño
Lha	Agulha	Spanish Ila	Imagine if L had ~
Lho	Pedregulho	Spanish Ila	

Acentos e Símbolos Gráficos

In Portuguese, there are also a few accents and graphic symbols, usually put over vowels, to help us understand how the word is pronounced. Accents are used only over vowels to determine how opened or closed our mouths will be when we pronounce the sound and also gives us an idea on how much time is spent on letting out that syllable.

Ex: Índio → eehn–diiuh. The first syllable (Ín) is spoken with a more intense movement of the mouth to create the (ee) sound, making it last longer to be spoken the remaining syllable (dio).

Pêssego → Pe–seh-gu. To make the first syllable, we seem to move our mouth less and faster than for índio.

´ Acento Agudo (Acute Accent) – Indicates the stressed syllable has an open tone.: água, gráfico, caí, índio, sipó, óculos, café, pé, pó, baú

` Acento Grave (Grave Accent [actually not an accent]) - Indicates the joining of the preposition *a* with the article *a* or the pronoun *aquele*: Vou a+a escola → Vou à escola. *I am going to school.*

^ Acento Circunflexo (Circumflex Accent) – Used to indicate a closed tone in the pronunciation, it is only used above the letters A, E, and O: campânula, pêssego, pôr.

~ Til (Tilde) – The tilde is not called an accent, it is a graphic symbol used to indicate when a pronunciation is nasalized. It is probably one of the hardest sound to explain because it isn't common in English. In Portuguese, it is only used over the vowels A and O. Generally, the ã is used in singular words while õ is in plural ones, however, there are exceptions: Avião, sertão, cidadão, cidadÃOS, pão, pÃES botões, cordões. The best way to train out the sound would be getting a word, Sao for example, saying it, paying attention to the way it leaves your mouth, and the saying it again holding your nose. The sound will come out different so pay attention again and start practicing without holding your nose.

Ç – C Cedilha - Portuguese only uses cedilla on the letter C (In Romanian, for example, the cedilla is used under the T for quick "ts" sounds and under the S for "sh") "S" (or Portuguese "ss") sound. It is not an accent; it is a graphic symbol to indicate the change of sound when used before the vowels A, O, and U. It is never used in the beginning of a word, nor before the vowels E and I. The Ce and Ci combinations already use the "S" sound by rule, so they do not need Ç.

Palhaço, Carcaça, Doçura, Começo, Dobradiça, Tradição, Lições.

Cebola, Amanhecer, Cicatriz, Bicicleta

In-word pronunciation of consonants.

Algumas consoantes tem mais do que uma pronúncia. Isso depende primeiramente da sua localização nas palavras. Se estiverem no início da palavra, normalmente não mudam foneticamente, mas quando recolocados dentro das palavras e na frente de certas vogais, como E, eles podem mudar. Isso é um produto típico do regionalismo. Pessoas do estado de São Paulo falam diferente daqueles de Minas Gerais ou Rio de Janeiro.

Some consonants have more than one pronunciation. It mainly depends on where they are placed in the words. If they are in the beginning of the word, they usually do not change phonetically, but when they moved out within the words and are in front of certain vowels, like E, they can change. This is mainly a product of localism. People from the State of São Paulo speak differently than those from Minas Gerais or Rio de Janeiro.

The Letter G → like the letter C, before the vowels A, O, and U and accompanied by other consonants as R it makes one sound and before E and I, it makes another. Before A, O, And U and consonants. → Gastronomia, Global, Grande. Same as an English G.

Before E and I. → Gigante, Gênio. Same sound as the final G in Garage.

The Letter D → D as in Dado (like Dice), and Dignidade (the D makes more of a G or J sound).

The Letter Q → like the words question or quarantine, there are words in Portuguese that also make the qua (kwa) sound. However, there are also words (after much change in the language) that no longer make a kwa sound and only k. Ex: Kwa → Quarentena, Quadrado. K → Questão, Queijo.

The Letter R → When the word starts with the letter R or there is a "RR" in the middle of the word, the sound will be of the letter H. Rato, Ritmo, Carro, Serra.

When before a consonant, like T, it makes an ar or or sound (familiar to English speaker), however when alone between vowels the sound is a quicker touch of the tongue r, like in Spanish. → Areia, Erosão.

The Letter S → S as in subida (like snake or sandal), and Z as in mesa (like zebra).

The Letter T → In the beginning of a word before the vowel I, it is normally pronounced like chi, as well as at the middle or end of words where the T is then followed by E or I. Before A, O, and U, the sound of the T is that of the word Time or Tune. Ex: Tomate, Portátil.

Numbers

Below are the ordinal numbers in Portuguese with a pronunciation helper

Number	Portuguese	pronunciation	Number	Portuguese	pronunciation
1	Um	Oom	11	Onze	Oh-nzee
2	Dois	Doys	12	Doze	Dough-zee
3	Três	Trreys	13	Treze	Treh-zee
4	Quatro	Quahtru	14	Quatorze	Ka-tor-zee
5	Cinco	Sinku	15	Quinze	Keen-zee
6	Seis	Seys			
7	Sete	Sehtchi			
8	Oito	Oytu			
9	Nove	Nohvee			
10	Dez	Deyz			

From the number 16 and on the written and spoken way becomes repetitive.

16, dezesseis – Deh-zeh-seys

17, dezessete – Deh-zeh-sehtchi

The translation is literally ten and six, ten and seven, put together into one word.

Number	Portuguese	Pronunciation	Number	Portuguese	Pronunciation
20	Vinte	Veen-tchi	500	Quinhentos	Keen-yehn-tus
30	Trinta	Treen-tah	600	Seiscentos	Seys-cehn-tus
40	Quarenta	Quah-rehn-tah	700	Setecentos	Seh-tchi-cehn-tus
50	Cinquenta	Sihn-quehn-tah	800	Oitocentos	Oy-tu-cehn-tus
60	Sessenta	Seh-sehn-tah	900	Novacentos	Noh-vi-cehn-tus
70	Setenta	Seh-sehn-ta	1000	Mil	mihl
80	Oitenta	Oy-tehn-ta	1000000	Um milhão	Oom mihl-yão
90	Noventa	Nough-vehn-tah	2000000	Dois milhões	Doys-mihl-yões
100	Cem	Sehm			
200	Duzentos	Doo-zehn-tus			
300	Trezentos	Treh-zehn-tus			
400	quatrocentos	Quah-troh-cehn-tus			

We do not use the “e” as in and when we are saying larger numbers such as
1256 um mil duzentos e cinquenta e seis

In informal situations, we don’t say um mil, we only say mil.