Portuguese sounds A pronúncia

One spelling, two accents: Brazil and Portugal write almost every word the same way but say it differently. Neither is more correct: follow the one your shows use. Where they differ, the hints are marked BR and PT. Orange hints spell the sound:

KAH-zuh	capitals: the part you stress	**sh zh**	ship, and the s in measure
ah eh ee	a in father, e in bed, ee in see	**ly ny**	the lli in million, the ny in canyon
aw oh oo	aw in law, o in go with no w, oo in food	**r**	one quick tap of the tongue, like tt in American better
ay	a closed e: say, with no y at the end	**h rr**	the strong r: Brazil a throaty h, Portugal rr (page 5)
uh	a in about: end a, a before m, n; PT unstressed a	**ch j**	Brazil: t and d before an ee sound
ng	a nasal vowel: through the nose, no real g (page 3)	**i**	Portugal: es- at the start, a short i as in ship
eye ow oy	two vowels in one beat: eye, how, boy	◡	two words said as one (page 5)

The alphabet: what the letters are called

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M
a	bê	cê	dê	é	efe	gê	agá	i	jota	cá	ele	eme
ah	**bay**	**say**	**day**	**eh**	BR **EH-fee** PT **EHF**	**zhay**	BR **ah-GAH** PT **uh-GAH**	**ee**	**ZHAW-tuh**		BR **EH-lee** PT **EHL**	BR **AY-mee** PT **EHM**

N	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V	W	X	Y	Z
ene	ó	pê	quê	erre	esse	tê	u	vê	dáblio	xis	ípsilon	zê
BR **AY-nee** PT **EHN**	**aw**	**pay**	**kay**	BR **EH-hee** PT **EH-rruh**	BR **EH-see** PT **EHS**	**tay**	**oo**	**vay**		BR **shees** PT **sheesh**		**zay**

K, W, Y appear in names and borrowed words like **karaokê**, **show** and **yoga**. In Portugal you may also hear **guê** for G, **capa** for K, **duplo vê** for W and **i grego** for Y.

Letters that don't sound like English

lh · nh	ly, as in million · ny, as in canyon	filho **FEE-lyoo** · vinho **VEE-nyoo**
ç · ch	s · sh	praça **PRAH-suh** · chá **shah**
j · g + e, i	zh, the s in measure	jogo **ZHOH-goo** · gelo **ZHAY-loo**
h	always silent	hora **AW-ruh**, hoje BR **OH-zhee** PT **OHZH**
s · ss	s at the start and as ss · z between vowels	massa **MAH-suh** · casa **KAH-zuh**, mesa **MAY-zuh**
r · rr	the strong r, at the start and as rr	rato BR **HAH-too** PT **RRAH-too**, terra BR **TEH-huh** PT **TEH-rruh**
r	a tap, like tt in American better	caro **KAH-roo**, hora **AW-ruh**
r at the end	Portugal a tap · Brazil varies (page 5)	mar **mahr**, falar BR **fah-LAHR** PT **fuh-LAHR**
t · d + ee	Brazil ch · j (most regions) · Portugal t, d	dia BR **JEE-uh** PT **DEE-uh**, noite BR **NOY-chee** PT **NOYT**
s · z at the end	Brazil s · Portugal sh, also before a consonant	luz BR **loos** PT **loosh**, festa BR **FEHS-tuh** PT **FEHSH-tuh**
l at the end	Brazil w · Portugal l, as in full	Brasil BR **brah-ZEEW** PT **bruh-ZEEL**, alto BR **OW-too** PT **AHL-too**

x
four sounds: most often sh, the rest you learn with the word

sh
caixa **KYE-shuh**
lixo **LEE-shoo**

ks
táxi **TAHK-see**
tóxico **TAWK-see-koo**

s
próximo **PRAW-see-moo**
máximo **MAH-see-moo**

z
exame BR **eh-ZUH-mee** PT **ee-ZUHM**
exemplo BR **eh-ZAYNG-ploo** PT **ee-ZAYNG-ploo**

Brazil or Portugal? for Brazilian shows read the BR hints, for shows from Portugal the PT ones. A hint with no tag is the same in both. Page 5 has the differences inside each country.

Vowels As vogais

Seven vowels under the stress: i and u have one sound each, and a is ah (uh before m or n), but e and o have two, open and closed. An accent shows which: é and ó are open, ê and ô closed. With no accent, learn it with the word.

a	**ah** a in father	gato **GAH-too** cat	sala **SAH-luh** living room
é	**eh** open: e in bed	pé **peh** foot	ela **EH-luh** she
ê	**ay** closed: say, with no y	três BR **trays** PT **traysh** three	ele BR **AY-lee** PT **AYL** he
i	**ee** ee in see	vida **VEE-duh** life	livro **LEE-vroo** book
ó	**aw** open: aw in law	bola **BAW-luh** ball	porta **PAWR-tuh** door
ô	**oh** closed: o in go, with no w	bolo **BOH-loo** cake	ovo **OH-voo** egg
u	**oo** oo in food	tudo **TOO-doo** everything	lua **LOO-uh** moon

Same letters, a different vowel: **bola** **BAW-luh** is a ball, **bolo** **BOH-loo** a cake. Some words even open up in the plural: **ovo** **OH-voo**, **ovos** BR **AW-voos** PT **AW-voosh**.

Unstressed vowels: where Brazil and Portugal differ most

BR Brazil: clear, with three changes at the end

Before the stress every vowel is said clearly. At the end of a word an unstressed o sounds like oo, e like ee and a like uh: **gato** **GAH-too**, **noite** BR **NOY-chee** PT **NOYT**, **casa** **KAH-zuh**.

In some regions an e or o before the stress turns into ee or oo too, so **menino** can be mee-NEE-noo. The hints keep the spelling's vowel.

PT Portugal: short and quiet

Away from the stress, a sounds like uh, e like a very short uh and o like oo. A final e is often not said at all, so the hints leave it out: **noite** BR **NOY-chee** PT **NOYT**, **cidade** BR **see-DAH-jee** PT **see-DAHD**.

In careful speech you'll still hear a faint uh there, and in quick speech an e in the middle often goes too (page 5). The stressed syllable always stays full.

pequeno
BR **peh-KAY-noo**
PT **puh-KAY-noo**
small

menino
BR **meh-NEE-noo**
PT **muh-NEE-noo**
boy

morar
BR **moh-RAHR**
PT **moo-RAHR**
to live (in a place)

boneca
BR **boh-NEH-kuh**
PT **boo-NEH-kuh**
doll

semana
BR **seh-MUH-nuh**
PT **suh-MUH-nuh**
week

Two vowels in one beat

ai eye

pai
pye
dad

baixo
BYE-shoo
low, short

au ow

aula
OW-luh
class, lesson

causa
KOW-zuh
cause

oi oy

oi
oy
hi

dois
BR **doys**
PT **doysh**
two

ou oh

sou
soh
I am

outro
OH-troo
other

ei: in Brazil it sounds like ay, and often just ê before r, j or x, so **primeiro** can sound like pree-MAY-roo. In Lisbon it's closer to uh plus a y. Both are normal.

Nasal sounds Os sons nasais

How: let air out through your nose as well as your mouth while you say the vowel, as in French bon. At the end of a word, don't close your lips for the m or touch the roof of your mouth for the n: the vowel carries it. The hints write ng, but there's no real g.

The tilde: ã, and õ in -õe

ã uhng

maçã
BR mah-SUHNG
PT muh-SUHNG
apple

irmã
eer-MUHNG
sister

ão owng

pão
powng
bread

não
nowng
no, not

mão
mowng
hand

limão
lee-MOWNG
lemon, lime

ães yng

mãe
myng
mum

pães
BR pyngs
PT pyngsh
loaves, rolls

cães
BR kyngs
PT kyngsh
dogs

õe oyng

limões
BR lee-MOYNGS
PT lee-MOYNGSH
lemons, limes

põe
poyng
puts

The same in both countries: -ão is one beat, like ow in how, through the nose. Its plural comes in three forms, learned with the word: **limão** lee-MOWNG, **limões** BR lee-MOYNGS PT lee-MOYNGSH; **pão**, **pães**; **mão**, **mãos**.

-em and -am at the end

-em: two ways

Brazil: ay through the nose. Lisbon and much of Portugal: like the ãe of **mãe**.

bem
BR bayng
PT byng
well

também
BR tuhng-BAYNG
PT tuhng-BYNG
also, too

jovem
BR ZHAW-vayng
PT ZHAW-vyng
young

parabéns
BR pah-rah-BAYNGS
PT puh-ruh-BYNGSH
congratulations

-am sounds like -ão: but unstressed, with the stress further back, so **falam** FAH-lowng is never confused with an -ão word.

m and n after a vowel: the vowel goes nasal

an · am	uhng	campo KUHNG-poo field	
en · em	ayng	tempo TAYNG-poo time, weather	gente BR ZHAYNG-chee PT ZHAYNGT people
in · im	eeng	sim seeng yes	cinco SEENG-koo five
on · om	ohng	bom bohng good	onde BR OHNG-jee PT OHNGD where
un · um	oong	um oong a, one	mundo MOONG-doo world

Before a vowel, m and n are ordinary: in **cama** and **uma** the m starts the next syllable and is said with the lips. In Brazil the vowel before it often sounds a little nasal too.

Oral or nasal: a different word

lá lah there	lã luhng wool	vi vee I saw	vim veeng I came

Stress and accents O acento

Two rules and the accents: Portuguese stress follows the spelling. Two rules cover most words, and every word that breaks them carries a written accent. The stressed part is pink.

1 · Ending in a, e, o (+ s), -am or -em: the second-to-last syllable

palavra	tomate	amigos	cantam	nuvem
BR pah-LAH-vruh PT puh-LAH-vruh word	BR toh-MAH-chee PT too-MAHT tomato	BR ah-MEE-goos PT uh-MEE-goosh friends	KUHNG-towng they sing	BR NOO-vayng PT NOO-vyng cloud

2 · Ending in anything else (r, l, z, i, u, -im, -um, nasal vowels): the last syllable

comer	azul	feliz	aqui	caju	jardim
BR koh-MAYR PT koo-MAYR to eat	BR ah-ZOOW PT uh-ZOOL blue	BR feh-LEES PT fuh-LEESH happy	BR ah-KEE PT uh-KEE here	BR kah-ZHOO PT kuh-ZHOO cashew	BR zhahr-JEENG PT zhuhr-DEENG garden

3 · A written accent: the stress is here, and it tells you the vowel

á é í ó ú	the stress, and é, ó are open	café BR kah-FEH PT kuh-FEH coffee · sofá BR soh-FAH PT soo-FAH sofa · música MOO-zee-kuh music · fácil BR FAH-seew PT FAH-seel easy · lápis BR LAH-pees PT LAH-peesh pencil
â ê ô	the stress, and the vowel is closed	lâmpada BR LUHNG-pah-duh PT LUHNG-puh-duh lamp, light bulb · português BR pohr-too-GAYS PT poor-too-GAYSH Portuguese and três BR trays PT traysh, avô BR ah-VOH PT uh-VOH
ã õ	a nasal vowel, and usually the stress	maçã BR mah-SUHNG PT muh-SUHNG · limões BR lee-MOYNGS PT lee-MOYNGSH
à	a + a, to the: never the stress	a BR ah PT uh the, to · à ah to the

Accents go where the rules fail: **fácil** ends in l, so without one you'd stress -cil. And **avô** BR ah-VOH PT uh-VOH and **avó** BR ah-VAW PT uh-VAW differ only in the vowel the accent shows.

Two vowels, two beats: an accent on i or u keeps it apart from the vowel before it: **saúde** BR sah-OO-jee PT suh-OOD, **saída** BR sah-EE-duh PT suh-EE-duh.

Same letters, different stress, different word

sábia	sabia	sabiá
SAH-bee-uh wise (a woman)	BR sah-BEE-uh PT suh-BEE-uh knew	BR sah-bee-AH PT suh-bee-AH thrush (a bird)

Spelt the way each country says it: a few words take a different accent, because the vowel is different: BR **bebê** PT **bebé** BR **econômico** PT **económico**.

Spoken Portuguese O português falado

One flowing line: Portuguese runs words together. A final s or z before a vowel becomes a z and starts the next word, in both countries. The link mark joins words said as one.

os‿amigos
BR **oo-zah-MEE-goos**
PT **oo-zuh-MEE-goosh**
the friends

as‿aulas
BR **ah-ZOW-luhs**
PT **uh-ZOW-luhsh**
the classes

dez‿anos
BR **deh-ZUH-noos**
PT **deh-ZUH-noosh**
ten years

mais‿ou‿menos
BR **mye-zoh-MAY-noos**
PT **mye-zoh-MAY-noosh**
more or less, so-so

BR Brazil: short forms you'll hear in every show

FULL FORM
está
SAID
tá
BR **tah**
is, OK

FULL FORM
estou
SAID
tô
BR **toh**
I am

FULL FORM
para
SAID
pra
BR **prah**
for, to

FULL FORM
você
SAID
cê
BR **say**
you

FULL FORM
não é
SAID
né
BR **neh**
right?

Everyday, not slang: Brazilians of all ages say these, and you'll often see them written in messages and in subtitles of casual scenes. Portugal shortens some words too: you'll hear **tá** and **tou** in casual speech.

PT Portugal: the e that disappears

depois
PT **duh-POYSH**
after, then
often like **d'pois**

setembro
PT **suh-TAYNG-broo**
September
often like **s'tembro**

precisar
PT **pruh-see-ZAHR**
to need
often like **pr'cisar**

devagar
PT **duh-vuh-GAHR**
slowly
often like **d'vagar**

Shorter in quick speech: the uh before the stress is there when people speak carefully, and often gone when they speak fast, so words lose a syllable. It's the main reason European Portuguese is hard to follow at first. It gets easier quickly with listening.

Little words you'll hear in every scene

então
ayng-TOWNG
so, then

tipo
BR **CHEE-poo**
PT **TEE-poo**
like, sort of

pois
BR **poys**
PT **poysh**
well, right

olha
AW-lyuh
look, listen

beleza
BR **beh-LAY-zuh**
cool, OK

fixe
PT **FEESH**
cool, great

Accents inside each country

The strong r

At the start of a word and as rr. In most of Brazil a throaty h, like the h in hat but stronger. In Portugal it's made at the back of the throat, like the French r, or rolled in some regions.

r at the end: Brazil

It varies by region: a soft h, a tap or an r close to English. At the end of a verb it's often dropped, so **falar** can sound like fah-LAH. The hints write r.

s at the end

Most of Brazil: s, or z before b, d, g, l, m, n, r, v. Portugal, and Rio de Janeiro in Brazil: sh, or zh before those, as in the PT hint of **mesmo**
BR **MAYZ-moo** PT **MAYZH-moo**.

Practice Prática

How: say each pair slowly, then fast, until the two words sound clearly different. Pick one accent and stick with its hints.

Open or closed?

avô — grandad — BR **ah-VOH** PT **uh-VOH**	avó — gran — BR **ah-VAW** PT **uh-VAW**
sede — thirst — BR **SAY-jee** PT **SAYD**	sede — headquarters — BR **SEH-jee** PT **SEHD**

Tap or strong r?

caro — dear, expensive — **KAH-roo**	carro — car — BR **KAH-hoo** PT **KAH-rroo**

One beat or two?

pais — parents — BR **pyes** PT **pyesh**	país — country — BR **pah-EES** PT **puh-EESH**

w or l?

mau — bad — **mow**	mal — badly — BR **mow** PT **mahl**

The same in Brazil, different in Portugal.

Tongue twisters

O rato roeu a roupa do rei de Roma. — the strong r: h in Brazil, rr in Portugal

Três pratos de trigo para três tigres tristes. — tr, the tap, and Brazil's ch in tigres, tristes

Ten sentences: cover the right side

1 **Bom dia**, **tu**do bem?
BR **bohng JEE-uh, TOO-doo bayng?**
PT **bohng DEE-uh, TOO-doo byng?**
Good morning, how are you?

2 A **mi**nha mãe **mo**ra no **Ri**o.
BR **ah MEE-nyuh myng MAW-ruh noo HEE-oo.**
PT **uh MEE-nyuh myng MAW-ruh noo RREE-oo.**
My mum lives in Rio.

3 O ca**fé** es**tá quen**te.
BR **oo kah-FEH ees-TAH KAYNG-chee.**
PT **oo kuh-FEH ish-TAH KAYNGT.**
The coffee is hot.

4 **On**de **fi**ca a esta**ção**?
BR **OHNG-jee FEE-kuh ah ees-tah-SOWNG?**
PT **OHNGD FEE-kuh uh ish-tuh-SOWNG?**
Where's the station?

5 **Ho**je faz ca**lor**.
BR **OH-zhee fahs kah-LOHR.**
PT **OHZH fahsh kuh-LOHR.**
It's hot today.

6 Não enten**di**, **po**de repe**tir**?
BR **nowng ayng-tayng-JEE, PAW-jee heh-peh-CHEER?**
PT **nowng ayng-tayng-DEE, PAWD rruh-puh-TEER?**
I didn't understand, can you say it again?

7 **Quan**to **cus**ta **is**so?
BR **KWUHNG-too KOOS-tuh EE-soo?**
PT **KWUHNG-too KOOSH-tuh EE-soo?**
How much is that?

8 A **ca**sa da **mi**nha a**vó** é pe**que**na.
BR **ah KAH-zuh dah MEE-nyuh ah-VAW eh peh-KAY-nuh.**
PT **uh KAH-zuh duh MEE-nyuh uh-VAW eh puh-KAY-nuh.**
My gran's house is small.

9 **Va**mos à **prai**a no **sá**bado?
BR **VUH-moos ah PRYE-uh noo SAH-bah-doo?**
PT **VUH-moosh ah PRYE-uh noo SAH-buh-doo?**
Shall we go to the beach on Saturday?

10 O **ga**to **dor**me na **ca**ma.
BR **oo GAH-too DAWR-mee nah KUH-muh.**
PT **oo GAH-too DAWRM nuh KUH-muh.**
The cat's asleep on the bed.

Meet a word you don't know? In Kitsumi, hover any word in subtitles to see what it means.