Ser and estar Ser e estar

Portuguese has two verbs for to be. ser says what something is. estar says where it is and how it is. Brazil and Portugal use them the same way; where the words around them differ, you'll see a BR or a PT tag. **ser is pink**, **estar is orange**, **ficar** (page 2) is gold.

The present

	ser I am, you are...	estar I am, you are...
eu I	sou	estou
tu you · one friend, PT	és	estás
ele, ela, você he, she, you · BR	é	está
nós we	somos	estamos
vós you all · rare	sois	estais
eles, elas, vocês they, you all	são	estão

Ways to say you

BR **você** the everyday you in Brazil. It takes the ele form: você **é**, você **está**.

PT **tu** the everyday you with friends and family in Portugal: tu **és**, tu **estás**. Also heard in parts of Brazil.

vocês you all, in both countries, with the eles form: vocês **são**, vocês **estão**.

vós rare: vós **sois**, vós **estais**, in old books and a few places in the north of Portugal.

In Portugal, você can sound distant. With people you don't know, many say o senhor or a senhora, or just the verb: Como **está**? a gente, we, takes the ele form too: a gente **está**. On this sheet, BR lines use você and PT lines use tu.

The two pasts

	eu I	tu you	ele he, she, you	nós we	vós you all	eles they, you all
ser perfeito: was	fui	foste	foi	fomos	fostes	foram
estar perfeito: was	estive	estiveste	esteve	estivemos	estivestes	estiveram
ser imperfeito: was	era	eras	era	éramos	éreis	eram
estar imperfeito: was	estava	estavas	estava	estávamos	estáveis	estavam

Which past? **Estive** em Lisboa duas semanas: a stay with an end, the perfeito. **Estava** em casa quando ela ligou: the scene, the imperfeito.

ser and ir share the perfeito: Foi incrível, it was amazing. **Fui** ao cinema, I went to the cinema. The rest of the sentence tells you which verb it is.

Right now: the big difference between Brazil and Portugal

BR Brazil: **estou** + **comendo**	PT Portugal: **estou** a + **comer**	= I'm eating
Estou comendo.	**Estou a comer**.	I'm eating.
Está chovendo.	**Está a chover**.	It's raining.
O que você **está fazendo**?	O que **estás a fazer**?	What are you doing?
Estava pensando em você.	**Estava a pensar** em ti.	I was thinking about you.
As crianças **estão dormindo**.	As crianças **estão a dormir**.	The kids are asleep.

How to build it: BR drop the r and add -ndo: falando, comendo, partindo. It's always regular, even fazendo and indo. PT estar a + the infinitive, with nothing to change. Parts of the south of Portugal use the -ndo form too.

Ser or estar? Ser ou estar?

ser: what something is

Who or what
identity

Este **é** o meu irmão.
This is my brother.

O que **é** isto?
What's this?

Jobs
no um or uma before the job

É engenheira.
She's an engineer.

Somos professores.
We're teachers.

Where from
ser de

Sou de Portugal.
I'm from Portugal.

BR De onde você **é**?
Where are you from?

What it's made of
ser de

O anel **é** de ouro.
The ring is gold.

É de algodão.
It's cotton.

Time and dates
the clock, the day

São duas horas.
It's two o'clock.

Hoje **é** segunda-feira.
Today is Monday.

Where an event is
a party, a match, a class

A festa **é** na minha casa.
The party is at my house.

Onde **é** o concerto?
Where's the concert?

Whose it is
ser de, ser meu

É meu.
It's mine.

O carro **é** da minha mãe.
The car is my mum's.

What it's like
looks, character, size

É alto e simpático.
He's tall and friendly.

A casa **é** linda.
The house is lovely.

estar: where it is, and how it is

Where it is
people and things that move

Estou em casa.
I'm at home.

O livro **está** na mesa.
The book is on the table.

Ele **está** no trabalho.
He's at work.

How you are
moods, feelings, health

BR Você **está** bem?
Are you OK?

PT **Estás** bem?
Are you OK?

Estamos contentes.
We're happy.

After a change
how something has ended up

A porta **está** aberta.
The door is open.

BR **Está** quebrado.
It's broken.

PT **Está** partido.
It's broken.

Going on now
the progressive

BR **Estou lendo**.
I'm reading.

PT **Estou a ler**.
I'm reading.

ficar: places, changes, and staying put

Where places are
buildings, towns, things that never move

Onde **fica** o banco?
Where's the bank?

O museu **fica** no centro.
The museum is in the centre.

Becoming
getting, ending up: a change

Fiquei cansado.
I got tired.

Ela **ficou** contente.
She was pleased.

Staying
its first meaning

Hoje **fico** em casa.
I'm staying in today.

Fica mais um pouco!
Stay a bit longer!

eu fico, fiquei · ele, você fica, ficou · eles, vocês ficam, ficaram *(present, then perfeito)*

The shortcut that breaks

You may have heard: ser is permanent, estar is temporary. It works often, but not always.

Ele **está** morto.
He's dead.
Nothing is more permanent, and it's estar: a state he has ended up in.

Ela **é** jovem.
She's young.
That won't last, and it's ser: it's what she's like.

Ele **está** sempre cansado.
He's always tired.
Always, and still estar: it's how he is, not what he is.

A better rule of thumb: ask whether you're saying what something is, or how it is. ser: what kind of thing, who, what it's like. estar: where it is, and the state it's in right now or has ended up in.

Where is it? a person or a thing that moves: estar, **Estou** no carro. A building or a town: **fica**, or ser, Onde **é** a estação? An event: ser, O jogo **é** no estádio.

Words that change Mudam de significado

Some adjectives mean one thing with ser and another with estar. ser says what the person or thing is like. estar says how it is right now: how it tastes, how someone looks or feels, whether a seat is taken. The ending still agrees: calado for a man, calada for a woman.

bom

ser: good

O filme **é** bom.
The film is good.

estar: tasty, or well again

A sopa **está** boa.
The soup tastes good.

After being ill: Já **estou** bom, I'm better now.

mau · mal

ser: bad, nasty

Ele não **é** mau.
He's not a bad person.

estar: unwell, in a bad way

Estou mal.
I feel awful.

mau is the adjective, mal the adverb: how you feel is estar mal. For bad, Brazil also says BR ruim a lot.

verde

ser: green

O carro **é** verde.
The car is green.

estar: not ripe yet

As bananas **estão** verdes.
The bananas aren't ripe yet.

seguro

ser: safe, a safe place

O bairro **é** seguro.
The area is safe.

estar: safe, out of danger

Aqui **estamos** seguros.
We're safe here.

Are you sure? is BR Tem certeza? PT Tens a certeza?

calado

ser: a quiet person

Ele **é** calado.
He doesn't say much.

estar: quiet right now

As crianças **estão** caladas.
The kids are quiet.

bonito

ser: beautiful

A cidade **é** bonita.
The city is beautiful.

estar: looking good today

Ela **está** muito bonita hoje.
She looks lovely today.

magro

ser: slim

Ele **é** magro.
He's slim.

estar: has lost weight

Ela **está** mais magra.
She's lost weight.

livre

ser: free, open to all

A entrada **é** livre.
Entry is free.

estar: free, not taken or busy

Este lugar **está** livre?
Is this seat free?

Free of charge is also grátis.

PT aborrecido

ser: boring

A aula **é** aborrecida.
The lesson is boring.

estar: bored, or annoyed

Estou aborrecido.
I'm bored.

PT In Brazil, aborrecido is mostly upset or annoyed.

BR chato

ser: boring, annoying

Esse jogo **é** chato.
This game is boring.

estar: being a pain

Você **está** chato hoje.
You're being a pain today.

BR Bored, in Brazil: **Estou** entediado. Portugal uses chato too, mostly for annoying.

Only estar: pronto, ready, takes estar: **Estou** pronta! For food that tastes good right now, both countries say **Está** delicioso, and Brazil also says BR **Está** gostoso.

From shows Nas séries

4 · lines you'll hear every day

Está tudo bem?
Is everything OK?
short and everywhere: Tudo bem? How are you?

Estou com fome.
I'm hungry.
estar com: also frio, sono, pressa. Portugal often says Tenho fome

É que não tenho tempo.
The thing is, I don't have time.
É que starts an excuse or a reason

Está combinado.
It's a deal.
or just Combinado!

Estou cansada.
I'm tired.
cansado for a man, cansada for a woman

Que horas **são**?
What time is it?
time takes ser: **São** três horas. **É** uma hora.

BR Tá bom.
OK. Fine.
tá is **está** said fast

PT **Está** bem.
OK. Fine.
the everyday OK in Portugal

BR **Fica** tranquilo.
Don't worry.
ficar, to stay: stay calm. tranquila to a woman

PT **Fica** descansado.
Don't worry.
word for word, stay rested. descansada to a woman

Fiquei com medo.
I got scared.
ficar for a change: I ended up afraid

Foi sem querer.
I didn't mean to.
word for word, it was without wanting

BR Você **está brincando**?
Are you kidding?
estar + -ndo, the Brazilian way

PT **Estás a brincar**?
Are you kidding?
estar a + infinitive, the Portuguese way

BR Onde você **está**?
Where are you?
half the phone calls in any show. Casual: Cadê você?

PT Onde **é** que **estás**?
Where are you?
é que in a question is very common in Portugal

Está calor!
It's hot!
weather right now takes estar: **Está** frio.

Não **é** nada.
It's nothing.
when someone asks what's wrong

Como é? or Como está? Two questions that look alike

Como **é** o novo chefe?
What's the new boss like?
ser: what he's like as a person

Como **está** a avó?
How's Gran?
estar: how she is right now

Brazil and Portugal

ser and estar work the same way in both countries. The differences are in the words around them:

right now
BR **Estou comendo** · PT **Estou a comer**

OK
BR Tá bom · PT **Está** bem

hungry
BR **Estou** com fome · PT Tenho fome, or **estou** com fome

you, one person
BR você **está** · PT tu **estás**

estou, said fast
BR tô · PT tou

the toilet
BR Onde **fica** o banheiro? · PT Onde **fica** a casa de banho?

Practice Prática

5 · twenty lines · answers at the bottom

How: fill each gap with the right form of ser, estar or ficar. Lines tagged BR or PT use that country's everyday you and way of saying right now. Say the line out loud, then check the answers in small print at the bottom.

1 Ela _____ médica.
She's a doctor.

2 Onde _____ as chaves?
Where are the keys?

3 Nós _____ do Brasil.
We're from Brazil.

4 _____ muito cansada. Vou dormir.
I'm really tired. I'm off to bed.

5 A reunião _____ na sala 3.
The meeting is in room 3.

6 _____ nove e meia.
It's half past nine.

7 PT _____ pronta, Marta? Vamos embora.
Are you ready, Marta? Let's go.

8 BR Você _____ com fome?
Are you hungry?

9 De quem _____ este livro?
Whose book is this?

10 BR _____ chovendo lá fora.
It's raining outside.

11 A mesa _____ de madeira.
The table is made of wood.

12 A estação _____ perto daqui.
The station is near here.

13 Quando eu _____ criança, morava em Lisboa.
When I was a child, I lived in Lisbon.

14 O casamento _____ no sábado passado.
The wedding was last Saturday.

15 _____ três horas quando ela chegou.
It was three o'clock when she arrived.

16 BR Liguei para você, mas você não _____ em casa.
I called you, but you weren't at home.

17 Os meus pais _____ de férias.
My parents are on holiday.

18 Quando vi o preço, _____ de boca aberta.
When I saw the price, my jaw dropped.

19 Vocês _____ muito calados hoje.
You're all very quiet today.

20 PT Ainda _____ a trabalhar?
Are you still working?

Answers

1 **é** a job
2 **estão** where things are
3 **somos** where from
4 **Estou** how you feel
5 **é** where an event is
6 **São** time, and plural
7 **Estás** pronto takes estar
8 **está** você takes the ele form
9 **é** whose it is
10 **Está** estar + -ndo
11 **é** what it's made of
12 **fica** or **é** a place that never moves
13 **era** what you were, back then
14 **foi** an event, and over
15 **Eram** clock time in the past
16 **estava** where, as the scene
17 **estão** estar de férias
18 **fiquei** a reaction, a change
19 **estão** how you are today
20 **estás** estar a + infinitive

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