How Portuguese verbs work Os verbos

1 · after basic words, the next step

Every verb has a dictionary form. It ends in -ar, -er or -ir. Drop that ending and you have the stem. Then add a new ending that says who is doing it.

-ar verbs the biggest family

falar speak

fal + o = falo I speak

trabalhar work	**gostar** like · gosto de
morar live (in a place)	**estudar** study
olhar look	**precisar** need

-er verbs the second family

comer eat

com + o = como I eat

beber drink	**aprender** learn
vender sell	**escrever** write
entender understand	**correr** run

-ir verbs the smallest family

partir leave, break

part + o = parto I leave

abrir open	**assistir** watch (TV, a film)
decidir decide	**dividir** share, split
discutir argue, discuss	**insistir** insist

The ending tells you who

-o	-as	-a	-amos	-am
I eu	**you** tu	**he, she, you, we** ele, você, a gente	**we** nós	**they, you all** eles, vocês
falo	falas	fala	falamos	falam

In Brazil, three forms do most of the work

eu	você	ele, ela	a gente	vocês	eles, elas
falo	fala	fala	fala	falam	falam

Why so few? você takes the ele form, and so does a gente, the everyday way to say we. So in speech you mostly need fal**o**, fal**a** and fal**am**. Nós falamos is correct and common too, a bit more careful.

So Brazilians keep the pronoun

Você fala inglês?
Do you speak English?

A gente come às oito.
We eat at eight.

Ele trabalha aqui.
He works here.

Vocês moram juntos?
Do you all live together?

Ways to say you

você
one person, everyday

most of Brazil, with anyone. It takes the ele form.

Você está bem?

tu
one person, close

Portugal, with friends and family, and parts of Brazil. In Brazil you'll often hear it with the ele form: tu vai.

Tu estás bem?

o senhor, a senhora
one person, polite

older people, strangers, formal moments, in both countries. Takes the ele form.

O senhor está bem?

vocês
you all

more than one person, polite or not, in Brazil and Portugal. Takes the eles form.

Vocês estão bem?

vós: the old you all, with its own endings. You'll meet it in the Bible and old texts, not in shows, so this guide leaves it out.

Meet a verb you don't know? In Kitsumi, hover any word in Portuguese subtitles to see what it means. Then come back here and work out the form.

The present tense o presente

2 · pink is the ending, or the surprise

The regular patterns: -ar, -er, -ir

	falar speak	comer eat	partir leave, break
eu I	fal**o**	com**o**	part**o**
tu you, close · Portugal	fal**as**	com**es**	part**es**
ele, ela, você he, she, you · a gente	fal**a**	com**e**	part**e**
nós we	fal**amos**	com**emos**	part**imos**
eles, elas, vocês they, you all	fal**am**	com**em**	part**em**

Two families, nearly one: -er and -ir share every ending except nós: com**emos** but part**imos**. And the eu form is always the stem plus -o.

One form, three meanings: falo is I speak, I'm speaking, and often I'll speak: Amanhã eu falo com ele, I'll talk to him tomorrow.

Twelve verbs you hear all the time: pink marks the surprises

	ser be (who, what)	estar be (where, how)	ter have	ir go	fazer do, make	poder can
eu I	**sou**	est**ou**	**tenho**	**vou**	faço	posso
tu you, close · Portugal	**és**	est**ás**	**tens**	**vais**	fazes	podes
ele, ela, você he, she, you · a gente	**é**	est**á**	**tem**	**vai**	faz	pode
nós we	**somos**	estamos	temos	**vamos**	fazemos	podemos
eles, elas, vocês they, you all	**são**	est**ão**	**têm**	**vão**	fazem	podem

	querer want	dizer say, tell	saber know (a fact)	ver see, watch	vir come	dar give
eu I	quero	d**i**go	**sei**	v**e**jo	**venho**	**dou**
tu you, close · Portugal	queres	dizes	sabes	**vês**	**vens**	**dás**
ele, ela, você he, she, you · a gente	quer	diz	sabe	**vê**	**vem**	**dá**
nós we	queremos	dizemos	sabemos	vemos	vimos	damos
eles, elas, vocês they, you all	querem	dizem	sabem	**veem**	**vêm**	**dão**

Spot the pattern: nós is nearly always regular: temos, fazemos, sabemos, damos. The surprises sit in eu, tu, ele and eles, and many of them end in -ou or -ão: sou, estou, vou, dou; são, estão, vão, dão.

Tiny accents matter: tem is he has, têm is they have, and they sound the same. vem and vêm work the same way. In Brazil, você and a gente take the ele column: você tem, a gente vai.

The past O pretérito perfeito

One word does it: falei is I spoke and I have spoken. It's the past you hear most, for things that happened and are done.

	falar spoke	comer ate	partir left, broke
eu I	fal**ei**	com**i**	part**i**
tu you, close · Portugal	fal**aste**	com**este**	part**iste**
ele, ela, você he, she, you · a gente	fal**ou**	com**eu**	part**iu**
nós we	fal**amos**	com**emos**	part**imos**
eles, elas, vocês they, you all	fal**aram**	com**eram**	part**iram**

Ten verbs with their own past: pink is the new stem

	ser and ir was, went	ter had	fazer did, made	poder could	querer wanted
eu I	**fui**	**tive**	**fiz**	**pude**	**quis**
tu you, close · Portugal	**fo**ste	**tiv**este	**fiz**este	**pud**este	**quis**este
ele, ela, você he, she, you · a gente	**foi**	**teve**	**fez**	**pôde**	**quis**
nós we	**fo**mos	**tiv**emos	**fiz**emos	**pud**emos	**quis**emos
eles, elas, vocês they, you all	**fo**ram	**tiv**eram	**fiz**eram	**pud**eram	**quis**eram

	dizer said	saber knew, found out	ver saw	vir came	dar gave
eu I	**disse**	**soube**	**vi**	**vim**	**dei**
tu you, close · Portugal	**diss**este	**soub**este	**vi**ste	**vie**ste	**de**ste
ele, ela, você he, she, you · a gente	**disse**	**soube**	**viu**	**veio**	**deu**
nós we	**diss**emos	**soub**emos	**vi**mos	**vie**mos	**de**mos
eles, elas, vocês they, you all	**diss**eram	**soub**eram	**vi**ram	**vie**ram	**de**ram

The tu trick: learn the tu form and you get two more. Drop -ste and add -mos for nós, -ram for eles: fize**ste**, fize**mos**, fize**ram**. It works for every verb.

Watch out: fui is both I was and I went: Fui ao Rio, I went to Rio. pôde with a hat is he could, pode is he can. And vimos is we saw, and also we come. Portugal writes we spoke as falámos.

The other past: was, used to

The imperfeito sets the scene: how things were, what was going on, what you used to do. -ar verbs take -ava (falava), -er and -ir verbs take -ia (comia, partia). Here eu and ele share one form.

ser	estar	ter	ir
era was	estava was (where, how)	tinha had	ia was going, used to go

Quando eu **era** criança, eu **ia** à praia.
When I was a kid, I used to go to the beach.

Eu **queria** um café, por favor.
I'd like a coffee, please. A soft way to ask, very common in Brazil.

Future and more O futuro e mais

The everyday future: ir + dictionary form

A present form of ir, then the verb as it is in the dictionary. This is how people talk about the future.

Vou comer.
I'm going to eat.

Vamos ver.
We'll see. / Let's see.

Vai chover.
It's going to rain.

O que você **vai** fazer?
What are you going to do?

The one-word future

Add -ei, -ás, -á, -emos, -ão to the whole dictionary form. Three verbs shorten it. You'll see it in writing, news and songs more than in chat.

falar	comer	partir
falarei	comerei	partirei
fazer	**dizer**	**trazer**
farei	direi	trarei

One you'll hear a lot: Será? Could it be? I wonder.

Right now: Brazil and Portugal say it differently

Brazil uses estar + the -ndo form: drop the r and add -ndo, falando, comendo, partindo. It's always regular, even fazendo and indo. Portugal uses estar a + the dictionary form.

	Brazil	Portugal
I'm eating	estou comendo	estou a comer
what are you doing?	o que você está fazendo?	o que estás a fazer?
it's raining	está chovendo	está a chover

ser or estar: two verbs for be

ser · what it is

Sou a Ana.
I'm Ana. Who.

Ela é brasileira.
She's Brazilian. Where from.

São três horas.
It's three o'clock. Time.

Ele é chato.
He's annoying. That's him.

estar · how it is now

Estou em casa.
I'm at home. Where, for now.

Ela está cansada.
She's tired. How she feels.

Está quente hoje.
It's hot today. The weather.

Ele está chato hoje.
He's being annoying today. Just today.

Where things are: for a person or a thing that moves, use estar: Estou em casa. For a place that never moves, use ficar: Onde fica o banheiro? Where's the bathroom?

Saying no: não goes before the verb

Não sei.
I don't know.

Eu **não** falo inglês.
I don't speak English.

Não sei **não**.
I don't know, no. Brazil, casual

Não quero **não**.
I don't want to, no. Brazil, casual

Answer with the verb: Portuguese often skips yes. Você gosta? Gosto! Do you like it? I do! Brazilians also love a second não at the end. It softens the no, it doesn't double it.

Brazil or Portugal: the places where a learner trips.

	Brazil	Portugal
you, one friend	você fala	tu falas
right now	estou comendo	estou a comer
we spoke	falamos	falámos
I love you	te amo	amo-te
in fast speech	tô, tá	estou, está

Practice Prática

How: cover the right side with a strip of paper. Read the line out loud, say what it means and which form the pink verb is, then slide the strip down to check.

tô and tá: in Brazilian speech, estou shrinks to tô and está to tá. Subtitles often write them that way too: Tô cansado, I'm tired. Tá bom? Is that OK?

1	**Vamos**!	**Let's go!** ir, present, nós. The nós form also means let's
2	Não **sei**.	**I don't know.** saber, present, eu
3	**Tô** com fome.	**I'm hungry.** estar, present, eu: estou. Literally I am with hunger
4	Te **amo**.	**I love you.** amar, present, eu. Portugal says amo-te
5	**Cadê** você?	**Where are you?** Brazil, casual. Squeezed from que é de: é, from ser, hides inside
6	**Deixa** pra lá.	**Forget it. / Never mind.** deixar, an order to você. pra is para, said fast
7	**Tá** bom.	**OK. / Fine.** estar, present, ele: está. Literally it is good
8	**Fala** sério!	**Come on! / You're kidding!** falar, an order: speak seriously
9	Já **vou**.	**Coming! / On my way!** ir, present, eu
10	O que **aconteceu**?	**What happened?** acontecer, past, ele. -eu is the -er past

Your turn: make the form

1	ser eu	sou	2	ter você	tem
3	falar nós	falamos	4	ir eles	vão
5	fazer a gente	faz	6	poder eu	posso
7	fazer eu, past	fiz	8	ir ele, past	foi
9	comer eles, past	comeram	10	comer eu, going to	vou comer

Next: listen for these in a show you like. Once you've heard Vamos! and Não sei a few times, you'll catch the endings without thinking.