

THE BEGINNER'S GUIDE TO BRAZILIAN PORTUGUESE

EVERYDAY VOCABULARY AND GRAMMAR TO HELP YOU
SURVIVE IN BRAZILIAN PORTUGUESE (AND THEN SOME!)



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CHAPTER ONE

GREETINGS

GREETINGS

Brazilian Portuguese speakers use different greetings depending on the time of day, including:

Bom dia (good morning)

Boa tarde (good afternoon)

Boa noite (good evening/good night)

Note: You can also say “**Olá**” or “**Oi!**” a shortened version of the above three greetings, suitable in any informal situation.

There are, of course, other ways of greeting someone. Formal greetings include:

Como você está? (How are you?)

Como tá indo? (How's it going?)

O que você está fazendo? (What are you doing?)

Informal greetings include:

Tudo bom? / Como vai? (Hello, how are you? / How's it going?)

Common responses to these questions include:

Estou bem. (Very well.)

Mais ou menos (Okay, so-so.)

Bem, obrigado(a) (All good, thanks.)

Nada. (Nothing.)

When meeting someone for the first time, you can say “**Prazer**” (nice to meet you).

GREETINGS

When leaving somewhere, you can use the same expressions to say goodbye as you used to say hello, given the time of day:

Bom dia (good morning)

Boa tarde (good afternoon)

Boa noite (good evening/good night)

Other common ways to say goodbye include:

Adeus / Tchau(Bye)

Vejo você depois (See you later)

Até amanhã (See you tomorrow)

Até logo (See you soon)

Até a próxima (Until next time)

Até já / Até mais (See you soon/ See ya)

A few more formal ways to end a conversation or phone call include:

Tenha um bom dia! (Have a nice day!)

Se cuida (Take care!)



CHAPTER TWO

PRONUNCIATION

PRONUNCIATION

Unlike English, Brazilian Portuguese usually sounds how it looks. However, it is still helpful to go over the pronunciation.

CONSONANTS

- b** sounds like b in boy
- c** before an e or i — sounds like the s in safe
before an a, o or u — sounds like the c in coin or cat
- ç** before an a, o or u — sounds like the s in seven
- d** sounds like English except before i or e when it is sounds like the j in judge
- g** before an a, o or u — sounds like the g in goat
before an e or i — sounds like the s sound in pleasure
- h** silent except when followed by an n, when it makes the nasal sound similar to the Spanish ñ as in señor
- j** sounds like the s sound in measure
- k** sounds like the k in kite
- l** sounds like in English except it tends to nasalize the vowel preceding it; when following an a or i as the last letter of a word it takes on a w sound
- m** sounds like English except it tends to nasalize the vowel preceding it
- n** sounds like English except it tends to nasalize the vowel preceding it

PRONUNCIATION

CONSONANTS

- r as the beginning of a word it sounds like the h in hot
inside the middle of a word it sounds like a quick t in eighties
at the end a word it is pronounced like the h in hot
- s between vowels it sounds like the z in froze
in any other position it sounds like the s in sat
- t pronounced like English except when followed by an e or
(especially) an i when it is pronounced like the chee in cheese
- v pronounced like in English
- w also typically pronounced like a v sound
- x sounds like the sh in shoe, the s in saw, or the x in taxes
- y sounds like the y in yellow or the y in rainy
- z sounds like the z in zero

VOWELS

- a sounds like the a in father
- e sounds either like the ay in day or the e in set
- i sounds like the ee in sweet
- o Sounds variably like the o in tote or the o in office
- u pronounced like the oo in root

PRONUNCIATION

DIPHTHONGS

A diphthong is a sound made up of two vowels in a single syllable. The sound begins as one vowel and transitions into the second. These sounds are very common in Brazilian Portuguese:

ai	pronounced like the ai in Hawai'i
ão	pronounced like the own in crown but nasalized
au	pronounced like the ou in slouch
ei	pronounced like the ay in say
eu	pronounced ay-oo like a combo of the ay in say + the oo in boot
ia	pronounced ee-ah like a combo of the ee in feet + the a in father
ie	pronounced like a combo of the ee in feet and the e in dress
io	pronounced ee-oh like a combo of the ee in feet + the o in row
iu	pronounced ee-oo like a combo of the ee in feet + the oo in boot
oi	pronounced like the o in slow + the ee in feet
ou	pronounced like the ow in slow
ua	pronounced like the oo-ah in water minus the w sound
ue	pronounced oo-eh like a combo of the oo in boot + the ay in pay
ui	pronounced oo-ee like the oo in foot + the ee in feet
uo	pronounced like the uo in quotient

PRONUNCIATION

DIGRAPHS

Unlike a diphthong, a digraph is a combination of two letters that makes only one sound. The following are found in Portuguese:

- ch sounds like the ch in machine
- lh sounds similar to the lli in billion
- nh pronounced like the ni in onion; also similar to the Spanish ñ as in señor
- qu before a or o pronounced like the qu in quota
 before e or i pronounced like the c in capitol
- rr pronounced like the h in heat
- ss pronounced like the ss in missing
- te pronounced either like the ch in chair or the chee in cheese
- ti pronounced like the chee in cheese

It is important to note that Brazil is a huge country whose accents can vary significantly from region to region. Our explanations provided are for "standard Portuguese" (however disputed the term might be) so as to simplify things. Please be aware then when traveling throughout Brazil, you will hear differences.



CHAPTER THREE

PERSONAL PRONOUNS

PERSONAL PRONOUNS

PERSONAL PRONOUNS	
eu	I
você*	you, (singular, familiar)
o senhor / a senhora	you (singular, formal)
ele/ela	he/she
nós	we
vocês*	you (plural, informal)
eles/elas	they (masculine/feminine)

*Note that Brazilians (unlike the Portuguese) hardly ever use the pronouns “tu” or “vós”, preferring instead to use você (singular) or vocês (plural) when referring to “you”.

Brazilian Portuguese personal pronouns serve the same purpose as in English, but they can be a bit trickier for a few reasons.

First, many speakers do not use personal pronouns in spoken Brazilian Portuguese. This is because the verb conjugation will identify the subject. A pronoun is usually only used in the third person (he, she, or they). As you get more familiar with verb conjugations (which we’ll cover in this eBook), you’ll find this less confusing.

PERSONAL PRONOUNS

Second, Brazilian Portuguese uses different forms of address depending on the level formality required:

- Use **você(s)** with friends, peers, children, and people younger than you.
- Use **o senhor / a senhora** with your boss, people older than you, or any adults you do not know.

Vocês vão na festa? – Are you going to the party?

Onde você estava? – Where were you?

Você está de brincadeira! – You're kidding me!

O que vocês vão fazer hoje à noite? – What are you doing tonight?

Como vai o senhor/ a senhora? - How are you, sir/ ma'am?

A senhora já corrigiu nossas provas? – Did you correct our tests yet? (addressing a teacher)

O senhor pode assinar esses documentos, por favor? – Can you sign these documents, please? (addressing a boss)

O senhor tem horas? – Do you know what time it is? (addressing an older stranger in the street)



CHAPTER FOUR

NUMBERS 1-100

NUMBERS 1-20

Numeral	Portuguese	Pronunciation
1	um	oohm
2	dois	doy-z
3	três	treh-z
4	quatro	kwah-troh
5	cinco	seen-coh
6	seis	say-z
7	sete	seh-chee
8	oito	oy-too
9	nove	noh-vee
10	dez	deh-z
11	onze	ohn-zee
12	doze	doh-zee
13	treze	treh-zee
14	quatorze	kwah-tour-zee
15	quinze	keen-zee
16	dezesseis*	deh-z-ee-say-z
17	dezessete*	deh-z-ee-she-chee
18	dezoito	deh-z-oy-too
19	dezenove*	deh-z-ee-noh-vee
20	vinte	veen-chee

NUMBERS 20–100

After 20, the numbers follow a formula. Memorize the numerals of ten (twenty, thirty, etc.), then add the connector “e” (and) the single digits to form bigger numbers.

For example, twenty is vinte. So twenty-one is vinte e um, twenty-two is vinte e dois, etc.

Numeral	Portuguese	Pronunciation
20	vinte	veen-chee
30	trinta	treen-tah
40	quarenta	kwah-ren-tah
50	cinquenta	seen-kwen-tah
60	sessenta	seh-sen-tah
70	setenta	seh-ten-tah
80	oitenta	oy-ten-tah
90	noventa	noh-ven-tah
100	cem	say-m



CHAPTER FIVE

DEFINITE & INDEFINITE ARTICLES

DEFINITE & INDEFINITE ARTICLES

DEFINITE ARTICLES

In English, when referring to a specific object, we use one article: *the*. (The cats, the bottle, the sky, etc.) In Brazilian Portuguese, there are four ways to say the:

PERSONAL PRONOUNS	
o	masculine, singular
a	feminine, singular
os	masculine, plural
as	feminine, plural

We can see these pronouns in action when describing a dog:

o cachorro (the male dog)

os cachorros (the male dogs)

a cachorra (the female dog)

as cachorras (the female dogs)

In those examples, it's pretty obvious when to use the masculine or feminine pronoun—depending on the gender of the dog. But all Brazilian Portuguese nouns have gender, whether it's an animate object or not. Usually, words that end with an "a" are feminine and words that end with an "o" are masculine. Unfortunately, there are many exceptions, so you'll have to memorize it.

Examples:

o vestido (the dress) → "Dress" may seem like a feminine noun, but it's masculine. (Note that it ends in o!)

a gravata (the tie) → Again, "tie" might seem like a masculine noun, but it's feminine. (Note that it ends in a!)

DEFINITE & INDEFINITE ARTICLES

INDEFINITE ARTICLES

In English, when referring to an unspecified object, we use *a*, *an*, or *some* (a flower, an apple, some cupcakes, etc.) In Brazilian Portuguese, there are four ways to say a/an/some:

PERSONAL PRONOUNS	
um	masculine, singular
uma	feminine, singular
uns	masculine, plural
umas	feminine, plural

We can see these pronouns in action when describing a dog:

um cachorro (a male dog)

uns cachorros (some male dogs)

uma cachorra (a female dog)

umas cachorras (some female dogs)

Examples:

um chapéu (a hat)

uma porta (a door)

uns cadernos (some notebooks)

umas maçãs (some apples)



CHAPTER SIX

VERB CONJUGATIONS

VERB CONJUGATIONS

In Portuguese, there are three main groups of verbs, each of which has its own set of conjugation rules.

-AR VERBS

The first group of verbs, known as –ar verbs, includes verbs that end in –ar, such as **falar** (to speak), **cantar** (to talk), and **passar** (to pass). To conjugate –ar verbs, drop the –ar from the end of the verb (this forms the “root”) and append the correct conjugation suffix. The suffix changes depending on the subject performing the verb, so it’s important to memorizing these endings.

Verbs ending in –ar are conjugated using the following endings:

Singular		Plural	
eu	-o	nós	-amos
você, ele, ela, o senhor, a senhora	-a	vocês, eles, elas	-am

*Note: Você (you) uses the same conjugation as ele/ela (he/she), *NOT* tu. The same is true for the plural form.

Example: trabalhar (to work)

eu **trabalho**

você/ele/ela **trabalha**

nós **trabalhamos**

vocês/eles/elas **trabalham**

VERB CONJUGATIONS

-ER VERBS

The second group of verbs, known as –er verbs, includes verbs that end in –er, such as **comer** (to eat) or **viver** (to live). To conjugate –er verbs, drop the –er and add the following endings:

Singular		Plural	
eu	-o	nós	-emos
você, ele, ela, o senhor, a senhora	-e	vocês, eles, elas	-em

Example: comer (to eat)

eu como

você/ele/ela come

nós comemos

vocês/eles/elas comem

VERB CONJUGATIONS

-IR VERBS

The third group of verbs, known as –ir verbs, includes verbs that end in –ir, such as **partir** (to leave) or **ouvir** (to hear). To conjugate –ir verbs, drop the –ir and add the following endings:

Singular		Plural	
eu	-o	nós	-imos
você, ele, ela, o senhor, a senhora	-e	vocês, eles, elas	-em

Example: partir (to leave)

eu parto	nós partimos
você/ele/ela parte	vocês/eles/elas partem

As you can see, the different verb endings indicate the subject of the sentence—“parto” indicates that the subject is “I”, because it ends in “o”. That’s why many Brazilian Portuguese speakers drop the personal pronouns (unless it is the third person and you have not already indicated the subject.)



CHAPTER SEVEN

SER VS. ESTAR

SER VS ESTAR

One challenge for Brazilian Portuguese learners is distinguishing when to use **ser** or **estar**, both of which translate into “to be” in English.

SER (to be)			
eu	sou	nós	somos
você*/ele/ela	é	vocês*/eles/elas	são

ESTAR (to be)			
eu	estou	nós	estamos
você*/ele/ela	está	vocês*/eles/elas	estão

* Remember, Brazilian typically do not use “tu” or “vós”. To refer to “you”, use “você(s)”.

Generally, **ser** is used with adjectives expressing **permanent** characteristics, including nationality, physical appearance, and personality.

A esposa dele **é** médica (His wife is a doctor.)

Elas **são** gêmeas (They are twins.)

On the other hand, **estar** is used with **temporary** states or conditions, such as emotions.

O ônibus **está** partindo (The bus is leaving.)

Nós **estamos** em casa (We are home.)

It can be a bit tricky, but with practice you’ll begin to notice subtleties, such as: Café **é** quente. (Coffee is hot.)

In this case, use **ser** because coffee is usually hot.

Os cafés **estão** frios. (The coffees are cold.)

In this case, use **estar** because the coffees were hot but have become cold, which is not their normal condition.

SER VS ESTAR

WHEN TO USE SER

- **Origin or Nationality**
Sou de Honduras. (I am from Honduras.)
- **Occupation**
Ele **é** um bombeiro. (He is a firefighter.)
- **Possession**
Ele **é** meu cachorro. (It's my dog.)
- **Telling Time* and Place**
São dez e vinte. (It's 10:20.)
É meia-noite. (It's midnight.)
A festa **é** em sua casa. (The party is at her house.)
- **Essential Characteristics****
O livro **é** longo. (The book is long.)
Ela **é** loira. (She is blonde.)
O molho **é** picante (The sauce is spicy.)
Você **é** muito jovem. (You are very young.)

*Note: Use the plural third person conjugation for times such as 10:00 and 2:00, but use third person singular for midnight and noon.

**Note: Essential characteristics may not be permanent, but they describe the nature of the subject rather than describing the subject at a given moment. For example, the subject of the sentence “you are very young” will not be young forever, but for many years to come, he or she will be considered young. A nice example to illustrate this would concept would be “Você é bonita.” (You *are* pretty.) vs. “Você está bonita” (You *look* pretty.)

SER VS ESTAR

WHEN TO USE ESTAR

- **Temporary State or Condition**

Estou doente. (I am sick.)

Estamos perdidos. (We are lost.)

- **Emotions**

Você **está** muito triste hoje. (You are very sad today.)

- **Location**

Eles não **estão** em casa. (They are not at home.)

Note that your choice of *ser* or *estar* can change the meaning of a sentence:

Marco **está** cansado.

Marco is **tired**.

Correr uma maratona **é** cansativo.

Running a marathon is **tiring**.

A maçã **está** verde.

The apple is **unripe**.

As maçãs Granny Smith **são** verdes.

Granny Smith apples are **green**.



CHAPTER EIGHT

IRREGULAR VERBS

IRREGULAR VERBS

Although the conjugation rules we taught you earlier in this book will typically hold true, it wouldn't be a foreign language if there weren't exceptions to the rules. Let's take a look at some of the most common irregular verbs in Portuguese.

FAZER (to do)

eu	faço	nós	fazemos
você/ele/ela	faz	vocês/eles/elas	fazem

IR (to go)

eu	vou	nós	vamos
você/ele/ela	vai	vocês/eles/elas	vão

TER (to have)

eu	tenho	nós	temos
você/ele/ela	tem	vocês/eles/elas	têm

CRER (to believe)

eu	creio	nós	cremos
você/ele/ela	crê	vocês/eles/elas	creem

PODER (to be able to)

eu	posso	nós	podemos
você/ele/ela	pode	vocês/eles/elas	perdem

DAR (to give)

eu	dou	nós	damos
você/ele/ela	dá	vocês/eles/elas	dão

IRREGULAR VERBS

VER (to see)

eu	vejo	nós	vemos
você/ele/ela	vê	vocês/eles/elas	veem

DIZER (to say)

eu	digo	nós	dizemos
você/ele/ela	diz	vocês/eles/elas	dizem

OUVIR (to hear)

eu	ouço	nós	ouvimos
você/ele/ela	ouve	vocês/eles/elas	ouvem

PEDIR (to ask for)

eu	peço	nós	pedimos
você/ele/ela	pede	vocês/eles/elas	pedem

QUERER (to want)

eu	quero	nós	queremos
você/ele/ela	quer	vocês/eles/elas	querem

SABER (to know)

eu	sei	nós	sabemos
você/ele/ela	sabe	vocês/eles/elas	sabem

IRREGULAR VERBS

LER (to read)

eu	leio	nós	lemos
você/ele/ela	lê	vocês/eles/elas	leem

PERDER (to lose)

eu	perco	nós	perdemos
você/ele/ela	perde	vocês/eles/elas	perdem

TRAZER (to bring)

eu	trago	nós	trazemos
você/ele/ela	traz	vocês/eles/elas	trazem

VIR (to come)

eu	venho	nós	vimos
você/ele/ela	vem	vocês/eles/elas	vêm

RIR (to laugh)

eu	rio	nós	rimos
você/ele/ela	ri	vocês/eles/elas	riem

PÔR (to put)

eu	ponho	nós	pomos
você/ele/ela	põe	vocês/eles/elas	põem



CHAPTER NINE

NEGATION

NEGATION

There are many ways to negate a sentence in Brazilian Portuguese.

The most common negation involves simply placing **não (no, not)** before the verb.

Não sei. (I don't know.)

Eu **não** estou em casa. (I am not home.)

Eles **não** moram mais em São Paulo. (They don't live in Sao Paulo anymore.)

Beyond “no”, you can use a number of other words to negate a sentence more specifically. These constructions combine **não + verb + negator**.

Nem (nor)

Eu **não** tenho tempo **nem** dinheiro para viajar. - I don't have time nor money to travel.

Ela **não** gosta **nem** de gatos nem de cães. – She doesn't like cats or dogs.

Tampouco (nor/neither)

Meu pai **não** bebe, **tampouco** fuma. – My father doesn't drink nor smoke.

Se eu **não** consigo resolver esse problema, você **tampouco**. – If I can't solve this problem, you can't either.

Jamais (never)

Eu **não** volto **jamais** naquele restaurant. (I will never go to that restaurant again.)

Jamais descobriremos o que aconteceu aquele dia. (We will never find out what happened that day.)

NEGATION

Nunca (never)

Nunca fui à Europa. (I never went to Europe.)

Ele **não** desiste **nunca**. (He never gives up.)

nada (nothing)

Não temos **nada**. - We don't have anything. (literally: We have nothing.)

Eu não fiz nada de errado. – I didn't do anything wrong.

ninguém (no one, nobody)

Não tinha **ninguém** em casa. -- There was nobody home.

Ela **não** viu **ninguém** na festa – She didn't see anyone at the party



CHAPTER TEN

ASKING QUESTIONS

ASKING QUESTIONS

Question Words	
Que	What
Por que*	Why
Quando	When
Onde	Where
Como	How
Qual	Which
Quem	Who
Quanto(a)**	How much
Quantos(as)**	How many

* Brazilians use “por que” for questions and “porque” for answers.

**These question words agree with gender and number of the noun that follows.

Que horas são agora? (What time is it now?)

Por que eles precisam aprender português? (Why do they need to learn Portuguese?)

Quando a casa foi construída? (When was the house built?)

Onde eles moram? (Where do they live?)

Como ele foi para o Rio? (How did he get to Rio?)

Quem veio aqui sem ser convidado? (Who came here uninvited?)

Quanto custou o livro? (How much did the book cost?)

Quantas xícaras de café ela bebe por dia? (How many cups of coffee does she drink each day?)

ASKING QUESTIONS

For simple yes or no questions, you don't even need a question word. Intonation is key to indicating a question in spoken Brazilian Portuguese. Raise the pitch of your voice the same way you would when asking a question in English.

For example:

She's pregnant.

She's *pregnant*? → Emphasizing the end of the sentence turns it into a question.

You can also tag questions. A tag question consists of a short phrase added to the end of a statement that indicates you're asking a question.

Você é tradutor, não é verdade?

(You're a translator, aren't you?)

Você gosta disso, não é?

(You like that, don't you?)

Você sabe falar Português, não sabe?

(You can speak Portuguese, can't you?)

Ele não foi para o bar, foi?

(He didn't go to the bar, did he?)

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