

Portuguese Pronunciation Basics

Syllables that Are Normally Emphasized

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Video Chapters:

[0:00](#) - Open and Closed Vowels In Portuguese (Intro)

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Portuguese Pronunciation. Monosyllabic words

Hello, in the next video series
we are going to talk about
Portuguese Pronunciation.

So, this is part one.

This is how I first studied Portugues
in grammar school.

The teacher taught me the alphabet
and **how to build words** from it.

B A would be Ba [bá]

B E would be Be [bé]

B I would be Bi

B O would be Bo [bó]

B U would be Bu (as in boo!)

Ba, Be, Bi, Bo, Bu

The vowel is open (or tonic),
as they say in Portuguese.

"A tonic vowel".

A, E, I, O, U

And we could go on
with other consonants as well, like
Pa, Pe, Pi,
or Ra Re, Ri. Ro, Ru, etc.

This vowel opening
is only possible in this example
because the words are **monosyllabic**.

If I add a second similar syllable,
for illustration purposes,

The first [syllable] stays open,
but the second tends to close.

For example, BaBa,
it sounds like B**á**b**a**.

BeBe, it sounds like B**é**b**e**.

But when we say bébé,
(bébé is baby in English),
we stress the second syllable as well.
So, here, we add a graphical accent
to mark it Bébé, Café. Boné.

But in Bébé,
we also place an accent on the first syllable,
to ensure that it sounds like Bébé.
Otherwise, it would be Bbé.
Which makes no sense.

If, just for illustration,
I added an acute accent to "a"
in Café,
We would read Cá Fé.
Which isn't what we want.
Here, the "a" should be átono,
unstressed.

So, in summary,
a **monosyllabic** Portuguese word
tends to open the vowel.

Ba, **Be**. **Bi**. **Bo**, **Bu**

And a **two-syllable** word,
usually keeps the **first syllable stressed**,
open.

While the second syllable is closed.

To change the pattern,
we use a graphical accent.

Usually, we use the **acute** accent,
which is the one that *tilts* right.

But sometimes, the **grave** accent,
tilting to the left, is also used.

But **more about that in later** lectures.

Portuguese Pronunciation – Part Two

This is the second part of future videos.

Stressed and **Unstressed** Syllables

— **Sílabas tónicas e átonas**

Let's look at a few examples

Civiliza**ção**

Jor**na**da

Rápido

The stressed syllables are:

ção, na, and Rá.

In that last word, notice the graphical accent.

Without it, “pi” would likely take the stress,

making it sound like *rapido*

—which is incorrect.

In general, the tonic syllable
—the one spoken with more intensity—
doesn't go beyond the third syllable
from the end.

Ma-te-má-ti-ca

You don't need to memorize the following terms,
but they help illustrate how stress works in
Portuguese:

When the stress falls on the last syllable,
the word is called an **oxítona**:

*Ca**f**é, Pa**p**el, Jaca**r**é, Bon**e**.*

When the stress falls on
the second-to-last Syllable,
it's a **paroxítona**:

*Jor**n**ada, Es**co**la, **M**esa.*

And finally,
when it falls on the third-to-last,
it's a **proparoxítona**:

***R**ápido,
Sábado,
Árvore,
Básico,
Matem**m**ática,
Pit**t**ágoras.*

So, in summary:

- Tonic syllables carry the vocal weight.
- They **usually** fall within the **last three syllables**. Which could be the first syllable in the word if the word is short...
- This pattern helps classify words as oxítonas, paroxítonas, or proparoxítonas.

But here's the key:

There's no need to memorize these names.

The point is to become aware of **the pattern**.

So... how do you learn all this?

Well, these aren't rigid rules.

Portuguese is a **living** language.

The best way to learn

is to notice the trends,

practice often,

and **let experience guide you**.

But awareness is important as well.

Academic knowledge helps—
but it follows behind.

Theory lags behind usage.

Its job is to explain
what speakers already do.

If these examples help you
hear Portuguese more clearly,
consider subscribing the channel.

I'll keep unfolding this topic
in future videos.

Thank you.

Obrigado!

Useful Comments

Portuguese is an accentual language, which means that a shift in stress can create a completely different word —with a different meaning.

It's something every learner needs to pay close attention to.

Take this example: fábrica and fabrica.

- The first (fábrica) is a noun: a factory, a place.
- The second (fabrica) is a verb: he or she manufactures.

Same letters. Different stress. Different meaning.

This video gives you the starter tools to begin mastering these concepts.

Join me on [YouTube](#).

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