

PORTUGUESE UNLOCKED SERIES · VOL 1

Portuguese Unlocked

Level 1 — Beginner A1-A2 Edition

A1 · A2

*Master Beginner Portuguese — Pronunciation, Grammar, Real Sentences &
250+ Exercises with Answer Key. Brazilian Portuguese with European
Portuguese Notes.*

VEGA PUBLISHING

Portuguese Unlocked: Level 1 — Beginner A1-A2 Edition

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Published by Vega Publishing
Contact: hello@vegapublishing.com · www.vegapublishing.com

Series: Portuguese Unlocked, Volume 1
Language focus: Brazilian Portuguese (primary) with European Portuguese notes
CEFR Level: A1–A2 (Beginner)
Pronunciation notation: IPA based on Michaelis (BR) and Priberam (PT)

First Edition, 2026. Printed in the United States of America.
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Also in the Portuguese Unlocked Series

Portuguese Unlocked: Level 1 — Beginner A1-A2	← This book
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Special characters used throughout: á à â ã ç é ê í ó ô õ ú — verified across all fonts and Kindle conversion.

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Pronunciation Primer

The sounds that make Portuguese uniquely beautiful — and occasionally surprising

Portuguese is a phonetically rich language. Before diving into vocabulary and grammar, spend 10 minutes here — it will save you hours of re-learning later. This primer focuses on **Brazilian Portuguese (BR)** as your foundation; European Portuguese (PT) differences are flagged where they matter most.

1. Nasal Vowels — The Heart of Portuguese Sound

Portuguese has nasal vowels that don't exist in English. They are produced by letting air flow through both the mouth *and* nose simultaneously. The tilde (~) marks nasality.

Nasal Vowel Chart

LETTER	IPA	SAY IT LIKE...	EXAMPLE WORD
ã	ẽ	Nasal "ah" — like "sang" but mouth stays open	maçã (apple)
ão	ẽw̃	"OWN" with nasal hum — "owng"	pão (bread), não (no)
õe	ẽj̃	Nasal "eye" — "ayng"	mãe (mother), pães (breads)
ões	õjs̃	Nasal "oy" + s — "oyng-s"	limões (lemons)
em / en	ẽj̃	Nasal "ay" — "ayng"	bem (well), tempo (time)

Common Mistake — Don't Skip the Nasal!

Saying **pao** instead of **pão** sounds like a completely different word. The nasal quality is part of the vowel itself — it is not optional.

2. Special Digraphs: LH and NH

DIGRAPH	IPA	ENGLISH ANALOGY	EXAMPLE
lh	ʎ	Like "ll" in Spanish <i>llama</i> or "gli" in Italian	filho (son), trabalho (work)
nh	ɲ	Like "ñ" in Spanish or "gn" in French <i>ligne</i>	senhora (ma'am), manhã (morning)

3. The R — Three Different Sounds

POSITION	BR SOUND	PT SOUND	EXAMPLE
Word-initial / rr	x	ʁ	rua (street), carro (car)
Between vowels	ɾ	ɾ	para, amor — flapped r like "tt" in butter
Word-final (BR)	x ~ h	ʁ ~ silent	falar — often nearly silent in casual BR

4. The Letter X — Four Different Sounds

Portuguese X is one of the most variable letters in the language. Context determines the sound.

SOUND	IPA	WHEN	EXAMPLES
SH (most common)	ʃ	After diphthongs, after en-, most words	<i>xícara</i> (cup), <i>baixo</i> (short)
KS	ks	Foreign-origin words	<i>táxi</i> , <i>sexo</i>
Z	z	Prefix ex- before vowel	<i>exemplo</i> , <i>exame</i>
S	s	Certain words (must memorize)	<i>próximo</i> (next), <i>trouxe</i> (brought)

5. T and D Palatalization (Brazilian Portuguese Only)

In Brazilian Portuguese, **t** before *i* sounds like *ch*, and **d** before *i* sounds like *dj*. This is one of the most distinctive features of the Brazilian accent.

CONTEXT	BR PRONUNCIATION	PT PRONUNCIATION	EXAMPLE
t + i	tʃ ("ch")	t	<i>tio</i> (uncle): BR = "CHEE-oo", PT = "TEE-oo"
d + i	dʒ ("dj")	d	<i>dia</i> (day): BR = "DJEE-ah", PT = "DEE-ah"
te unstressed final	tʃi	ti / t	<i>noite</i> (night): BR = "NOY-chee"

6. Unstressed Vowel Reduction (European Portuguese)

PT Em Portugal — Vowel Swallowing

In European Portuguese, unstressed vowels are dramatically reduced or nearly silent — the biggest reason BR and PT sound so different. In BR, every vowel is clearly pronounced. In PT, *obrigado* sounds like "BREE-gah-doo"; in BR, it's "oh-bree-GAH-doo." Neither is wrong — just different systems.

"Portuguese is not Spanish with an accent. It has its own music. Learn to hear it first."

Pronunciation Primer (continued)

7. The Seven Oral Vowels — Full Quality Chart

Brazilian Portuguese has **seven oral vowel qualities**. Unlike English vowels, they are *pure* — they don't glide. Hold the sound steady and release it cleanly.

Oral Vowel Grid				
SPELLING	IPA	QUALITY	ENGLISH NEAREST	EXAMPLE
a (stressed)	a	Open central	"a" in <i>father</i>	casa — KAH-zah
é / open e	ɛ	Open front	"e" in <i>bed</i>	café — kah-FEH
ê / closed e	e	Close-mid front	"ay" in <i>say</i> (no glide)	mesa — MEH-zah
i	i	Close front	"ee" in <i>see</i>	livro — LEE-vroo
ó / open o	ɔ	Open-mid back	"o" in <i>off</i>	avó — ah-VOH (open)
ô / closed o	o	Close-mid back	"o" in <i>go</i> (no glide)	avô — ah-VOH (closed)
u	u	Close back	"oo" in <i>too</i>	luz — LOOZ

avó vs avô — One Accent, Two People

avó /a.'vɔ/ (open o) = grandmother · **avô** /a.'vo/ (closed o) = grandfather. The accent is the only spelling difference; vowel quality is the only sound difference. Mastering open vs closed o is immediately useful.

8. Stress Rules — Three Patterns, No Exceptions

#	ENDING	STRESS FALLS ON...	EXAMPLES
1	-a, -e, -o, -am, -em	Second-to-last syllable	CA-sa, FA-lo, FA-lam, JO-vem
2	Consonant (not -m/-s), -i, -u	Last syllable	fa-LAR, bra-SIL, a-ZUL, na-TU-ral
3	Accent mark present (á é ê í ó ô ú ã â)	Marked syllable — overrides rules 1 & 2	CA-fê, PA-is, a-VÓ, or-FÃ

9. Pronunciation Practice — 10 Must-Know Words

Say each word aloud before Chapter 1. These ten cover every sound pattern that surprises English speakers.

WORD	MEANING	IPA (BR)	LAYMAN GUIDE
<i>não</i>	no	/nẽw̃/	NOWNG (nasal)
<i>pão</i>	bread	/pẽw̃/	POWNG (nasal)
<i>manhã</i>	morning	/mẽ.'nẽ/	mah-NYAH (nasal final)
<i>obrigado</i>	thank you (m.)	/o.bri.'ga.du/	oh-bree-GAH-doo
<i>filha</i>	daughter	/'fi.ʎẽ/	FEE-lyah
<i>trabalho</i>	work	/trẽ.'ba.ʎu/	trah-BAH-lyoo
<i>já</i>	already / now	/'ʒa/	ZHAH
<i>tio</i>	uncle	/'tʃi.u/ (BR)	CHEE-oo (BR) · TEE-oo (PT)
<i>próximo</i>	next	/'prɔ.si.mu/	PROH-see-moo (x = s here)
<i>xícara</i>	cup	/'ʃi.kẽ.rẽ/	SHEE-kah-rah (x = sh here)

BR A Note on Regional Variation

Even within Brazil, accents vary significantly — carioca (Rio), paulistano (São Paulo), nordestino (Northeast) all sound different. This book targets educated São Paulo-area BR as a neutral baseline. Don't be alarmed when native speakers sound different — your pronunciation goal is *intelligibility*, not imitation of any single region.

How to Use This Book

This book is designed as a **structured self-study course** — not a reference you flip through randomly. Follow the chapters in order; each one builds on the last.

The Block System

The 16 chapters are grouped into four **Blocks** of four chapters each. Complete one block before moving to the next. Each block has a clear theme that keeps your learning focused.

The Callout System

Throughout the book, colored callout boxes highlight different types of content:

How to Use This Chapter	Pronúncia (Pronunciation)
Opens every chapter. Read this first.	IPA + layman guide. Mandatory every chapter.
BR Nota Cultural / PT Em Portugal...	Curiosidade (Fun Fact)
BR cultural context and PT variant notes.	Etymology, surprising usage, memorable details.
Pegadinha (Common Mistake)	Experimente! (Try It)
Pitfalls English speakers hit.	Quick exercises embedded in the chapter.

Vocabulary Tables

Every vocabulary list uses four columns: **Portuguese • English • IPA • Layman phonetic**. The layman column is your emergency guide when you can't remember the IPA — it uses plain English sounds to approximate Portuguese pronunciation.

The Answer Key

All exercises have answers in the back of the book (p. 169). Don't look ahead — attempt every exercise, then check. Getting something wrong is more valuable than skipping it.

Brazilian Portuguese as Your Default

This book teaches **Brazilian Portuguese** as the default throughout. Conjugation tables use **você** (not *tu*). Pronunciation targets Brazilian phonology. The PT callouts flag where European Portuguese differs — those boxes give the PT form with equal respect, never implying that either variant is "better."

Your Portuguese Learning Journey

The Portuguese Unlocked series takes you from zero to fluency, one volume at a time.

VOL 1	Portuguese Unlocked: Level 1 — Beginner A1-A2 Alphabet · Pronunciation · Articles & Gender · Present Tense · Simple Past · 250+ Exercises	A1–A2
	↓	
VOL 2	Portuguese Unlocked: Level 2 — Elementary B1 Imperfeito · Futuro · Object Pronouns · Commands · Comparative · Register	B1
	↓	
VOL 3	Portuguese Unlocked: Level 3 — Intermediate B2 Subjunctive · Passive Voice · Advanced Verbs · Idiomatic Expression	B2
	↓	
VOL 4	Portuguese Unlocked: Level 4 — Advanced C1-C2 Complex Syntax · Academic Register · Literary Portuguese · Native-Level Fluency	C1–C2

A Note on Pacing

Most learners complete one chapter per week in casual study, or two chapters per week in intensive mode. At one chapter per week, you'll finish this book in 4 months — ready for genuine basic conversation in Brazilian Portuguese. At two chapters per week, that's 8 weeks to A2 competence.

The most important thing: don't rush past a chapter you haven't absorbed. Pronunciation patterns learned correctly in Block 1 will serve you through all four volumes. Take the time.

*Turn the page to begin. **Vamos lá!** — Let's go!*

1

Sounds & First Words

Building your phonological foundation — the sounds, letters, and first words of Brazilian Portuguese

Chapter 1 — O Alfabeto e a Pronúncia

Chapter 2 — Cumprimentos e Apresentações

Chapter 3 — Substantivos, Gênero e Artigos

Chapter 4 — Números, Horas e Datas

CHAPTER 1

O Alfabeto e a Pronúncia

The Alphabet & Pronunciation

How to Use This Chapter

Don't try to memorize everything on first pass. Read through the whole chapter once, then drill the sounds that surprised you. Focus on: nasal vowels, lh/nh, the r, and x. Those four things will eliminate 80% of your pronunciation errors.

The Portuguese Alphabet

Portuguese uses the same 26-letter Latin alphabet as English, but the sounds are significantly different. Since the 2009 orthographic reform, the letters **k**, **w**, and **y** are official (used mainly in loanwords and proper names).