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use Fluent) on your computer or tablet, or download the app from the App Store or Google Play. Click here to take advantage of our current sale. [Expires at the end of this month.] Have you ever considered how widespread the Portuguese language is? Spoken by millions across various continents, Portuguese is a Romance language and one of the most widely spoken languages in the world. It holds a significant place in the linguistic landscape of the world. Let's get started.Historical Origins: Portuguese originated from Vulgar Latin in the Iberian Peninsula and evolved through various influences due to historical invasions and migrations.Geographical Distribution: Portuguese is spoken by over 250 million people worldwide, primarily in Portugal, Brazil, and several African and Asian countries.Linguistic Characteristics: Portuguese features unique phonetic elements, complex verb conjugations, gender agreements, and variations between European and Brazilian dialects.Learning Benefits: Learning Portuguese offers cultural enrichment, travel opportunities, professional advantages, and cognitive benefits.Learning Resources and Tips: Effective learning strategies include using language courses, online platforms, multimedia resources, and engaging in cultural immersion through travel, music, and cuisine.Portuguese, like many Romance languages, originated in the Iberian Peninsula, an area that today comprises Portugal and Spain. Its roots trace back to the Vulgar Latin spoken by Roman settlers. When the Romans arrived on the Iberian Peninsula in the 3rd century BCE, they brought with them Latin, the language of the Roman Empire. However, it wasn't the classical Latin of literature and formal communication that took hold among the local populations, but rather Vulgar Latin, the colloquial and everyday speech of the Roman soldiers, settlers, and administrators.For several centuries, the Roman rule facilitated the spread and establishment of Vulgar Latin across the region. This linguistic foundation was crucial as it set the stage for the development of the Romance languages, including Portuguese. The Latin spoken in the Iberian Peninsula began to develop distinct regional characteristics, influenced by the pre-Roman languages spoken by the indigenous peoples, such as the Lusitanians and the Celts.The fall of the Roman Empire in the 5th century CE marked the beginning of a new era of invasions and migrations that would further shape the linguistic landscape of the Iberian Peninsula. Germanic tribes, including the Visigoths and the Suebi, invaded the region, bringing with them their own languages and customs. While their linguistic influence on the developing Portuguese was limited, they did contribute some vocabulary and impacted the social and cultural fabric of the area.One of the most significant influences on the Portuguese language came from the Muslims, who ruled the Iberian Peninsula in the 8th century. The Muslims, who were Arabs and Amazigh from North Africa, ruled large parts of the peninsula for several centuries. During this period, the Arabic language left a profound impact on the Iberian languages, including Portuguese. Many Arabic words entered the Portuguese lexicon, particularly in areas related to science, agriculture, and everyday life. For example, words like "álgebra" (álgebra), "sugar" (açúcar), and "olive" (azeitona) have Arabic origins.By the 14th century, Portuguese had evolved into a distinct language, separate from other Iberian Romance languages such as Castilian (Spanish). The earliest known written records in Portuguese date back to the late 12th century, with documents such as the "Cantigas de Santa Maria," a collection of religious songs. The language continued to develop and refine itself, absorbing influences from neighboring languages and adapting to the needs of its speakers.The Age of Exploration in the 15th and 16th centuries played a pivotal role in spreading the Portuguese language far beyond the borders of Europe. Portuguese explorers and traders established colonies and trading posts in Africa, Asia, and the Americas, bringing their language with them. This global spread not only expanded the reach of Portuguese but also led to the creation of various dialects and creoles, influenced by the languages of the indigenous peoples and other colonizers.Portuguese is primarily spoken in Portugal, where it serves as the official language. Portugal, located on the westernmost edge of Europe, is the birthplace of the Portuguese language. Here, Portuguese is not just a means of communication but also a crucial part of the national identity and cultural heritage. The language is used in all facets of daily life, including government, education, media, and the arts. Lisbon, the capital city, and Porto are significant cultural and economic hubs where Portuguese thrives in both formal and informal settings.The most significant spread of the Portuguese language occurred in South America, particularly in Brazil. Discovered by Portuguese explorers in 1500, Brazil quickly became a cornerstone of the Portuguese Empire. Today, Brazil is the largest Portuguese-speaking country in the world, with over 200 million speakers. Brazilian Portuguese has developed its own distinct characteristics, influenced by the country's diverse cultural and ethnic makeup, which includes indigenous peoples, African and European immigrants. The language plays a vital role in Brazilian society, influencing its rich traditions in music, literature, and popular culture.Portuguese has a strong presence in Africa, a legacy of Portugal's extensive colonial empire. Several African countries have adopted Portuguese as an official language:Angola: With around 30 million people, Angola is one of the largest Portuguese-speaking countries in Africa. Portuguese is the lingua franca, used in government, education, and media, and serves as a unifying language in a nation with many indigenous languages.Mozambique: In Mozambique, Portuguese is also the official language and is spoken by a significant portion of the population. It is essential in administration, education, and national media, fostering a sense of national identity.Cape Verde, Guinea-Bissau, and São Tomé and Príncipe: These nations also recognize Portuguese as their official language. Each country has a unique linguistic landscape, with Portuguese coexisting with various Creole languages that have emerged from the blend of Portuguese and local languages.Portuguese has left an indelible mark in Asia, particularly in regions once part of the Portuguese colonial empire:East Timor (Timor-Leste): Portuguese is one of the official languages of East Timor. After gaining independence from Indonesia in 2002, East Timor reinstated Portuguese to revive its cultural ties with Portugal and Lusophone countries.Macau: A former Portuguese colony, Macau is now a Special Administrative Region of China. Although Cantonese and Mandarin are more widely spoken, Portuguese remains an official language and is used in government documents and legal proceedings.Goa, India: In the Indian state of Goa, a former Portuguese colony, Portuguese influence is still visible. While not an official language, Portuguese is spoken by some Goans, particularly among the older generation and in academic and cultural contexts.Portuguese phonetics can be complex for new learners due to its distinct sounds and nasal vowels. Here are some key features:Nasal Vowels: Portuguese is known for its nasal vowels, which occur when air passes through the nose as well as the mouth during pronunciation. Words like "pão" (bread) and "mãe" (mother) exemplify this feature.Consonant Sounds: Portuguese has a variety of consonant sounds that differ from English. The "r" sound can be particularly challenging; in European Portuguese, it's often guttural, while in Brazilian Portuguese, it may be a softer, tapped sound similar to the Spanish "r."Vowel Reduction: Unstressed vowels in Portuguese often undergo reduction, becoming less distinct. For example, the "e" in "leite" (milk) can sound like a schwa (the "a" in "sofa").Intonation and Stress: Portuguese has a musical quality, with a notable rise and fall in pitch. Stress usually falls on the penultimate (second-to-last) syllable in most words, but there are many exceptions, marked by accent marks.The grammar of Portuguese shares similarities with other Romance languages, but it also has unique aspects:Verb Conjugation: Portuguese verbs are conjugated to reflect tense, mood, and person. There are regular and irregular verbs, with the latter requiring special attention due to their deviations from standard conjugation patterns. For example, "falar" (to speak) is regular, while "ir" (to go) is highly irregular.Gender and Number: Nouns in Portuguese have gender (masculine or feminine) and number (singular or plural). Adjectives and articles must agree with the gender and number of the nouns they modify. For example, "o carro vermelho" (the red car) versus "a casa vermelha" (the red house).Pronouns: Portuguese uses a range of pronouns, including subject pronouns (eu, tu, ele/ela, etc.), object pronouns (me, te, se, etc.), and reflexive pronouns (me, te, se, etc.). The use of clitic pronouns, which attach to verbs, can be particularly tricky for learners.Sentence Structure: The basic sentence structure in Portuguese is subject-verb-object (SVO), similar to English. However, Portuguese allows for greater flexibility in word order for emphasis or stylistic reasons. For example, "Eu vi o João" (I saw João) can also be "Vi o João eu" for emphasis.Portuguese has several dialects, each with distinct phonetic, lexical, and grammatical features:European vs. Brazilian Portuguese: The most significant dialectal divide is between European Portuguese and Brazilian Portuguese. Brazilian Portuguese is characterized by its more open vowels and rhythmic intonation, while European Portuguese tends to have more closed vowels and a less pronounced melodic intonation.African and Asian Dialects: In countries like Angola and Mozambique, Portuguese has incorporated local linguistic elements, creating unique regional dialects. In East Timor, Portuguese is influenced by Tetum and other local languages.Regional Variations Within Countries: Even within Portugal and Brazil, there are notable regional variations. In Portugal, the northern dialects (e.g., Lisbon and Algarve) differ from the southern ones (e.g., Lisbon and Algarve). In Brazil, accents and vocabulary can vary significantly between states, with notable differences between the speech in Rio de Janeiro, São Paulo, and the northeastern states.Learning Portuguese offers numerous advantages:Travel Opportunities: Portuguese is spoken in diverse and beautiful countries across the globe. Knowing the language enriches travel experiences in Portugal, Brazil, Mozambique, Angola, Cape Verde, and other Portuguese-speaking countries.Professional Advantages: Portuguese can boost your career prospects, especially in fields like international business, diplomacy, and tourism. Brazil, as an emerging market, offers numerous opportunities for Portuguese speakers.Cognitive Benefits: Learning a new language, such as Portuguese, improves cognitive functions, enhances memory, and increases mental flexibility.While learning Portuguese is rewarding, it comes with challenges:Pronunciation: Portuguese pronunciation can be tricky, particularly the nasal vowels and the guttural "r" sounds. Brazilian and European Portuguese also have distinct pronunciation patterns, which can be confusing for learners.Grammar Complexity: Portuguese grammar involves complex verb conjugations, gender agreements, and the use of subjunctive moods. Mastering these aspects requires practice and patience.Dialectal Variations: The differences between European and Brazilian Portuguese, as well as regional dialects, can pose a challenge. Vocabulary, expressions, and pronunciation can vary significantly.Unlock the World with LingoLid! Our comprehensive platform offers beginner to advanced lessons with interactive audio, engaging content, and easy-to-understand lessons. Join us and learn at your own pace. Start your journey to fluency today with LingoLid and discover the beauty of learning Portuguese!The Portuguese language is a remarkable tapestry of history, culture, and linguistic richness. From its origins in the Iberian Peninsula to its global spread, Portuguese offers endless opportunities for learning, connection, and cultural appreciation. Whether you're delving into its literature, enjoying its music, or navigating its business landscapes, Portuguese is a language that continues to captivate and inspire.Oualid Cheddadi is the founder of LingoLid, a platform that inspires independent language learners worldwide, regardless of the language they are learning. The name "LingoLid" is derived from the Portuguese word for language, "língua," and the last three letters of Oualid's name, "lid."LingoLid.com/about-oualid-cheddadi/ Download Article Download Article Portuguese (Português, Língua Portuguesa) is a Romance language closely related to Spanish and the official language of over 250 million people in Portugal, Brazil, Mozambique, Angola, Guinea-Bissau, and more. With the rapidly-growing Brazilian economy rising in world importance, it's never been a wiser investment to start learning Portuguese, especially if you plan on traveling or doing business in South America or Africa. If you wish to say common words and phrases in Portuguese, you should start by learning some basic greetings and conversation basics, then work on expanding your vocabulary from there. The simplest Portuguese words and phrases are easy for non-speakers to learn, so what are you waiting for? Vamos! 1 Learn to say "Hi!" The perfect place to start greeting Portuguese is with greetings — learn these and you'll be able to say hello and goodbye to the Portuguese speakers you meet. Below are some of the most common words used for greetings: Hello: Olá (oh-la) Hi or Hey: Oi (oy) — informal Goodbye: Adeus (ah-deu-zh) Bye: Tchau (cha-oh) — informal Note that some of these words are marked with the label "informal." In Portuguese, it can be considered rude to use informal language with people you don't know, people who are older than you, and people in positions of authority. These aren't curse words — just words that aren't very dignified. A good rule of thumb is: don't use informal words with people you aren't close buddies with.[1] EXPERT TIP The best way to learn common words is to immerse yourself. Sign up for online conversations with people who speak Portuguese. There are some online services that pair native speakers from other countries so you can teach each other. You should also put yourself in situations in which speaking Portuguese is necessary. 2 Learn to greet people at different times of the day. Just like English, there are many different ways to greet people in Portuguese. These greetings allow you to remark on the time of day when you say hello: Good morning: Bom dia (Boh-n dih-ahor Boh-n dih-ah in Brazil) — actually means "good day," but it's used mostly before noon or before the noon meal. Good afternoon: Boa tarde (Boh-ah tahr-jia) — used after noon or after the midday meal until twilight. Good evening or good night: Boa noite (Boh-ah no-ee-tay) — used from twilight until the morning. Advertisement 3 Learn to ask people how they are. Portuguese is no different than most other languages — after you say hello to someone, it's common to ask how they're doing. Use these easy phrases to ask about the people you meet:[2] How are you?: Como está? (Coh-moh esh-tah? or Coh-moh es-tah? in Brazil) How's it going?: Como vai? ("Coh-moh vye?" rhymes with "eye") — informal What's up? (Only in Brazil): E aí? (E-aye (pronounced as one syllable)) — informal Is all well?: Tudo bem? ("Too-doo beng?") — informal 4 Learn to introduce yourself. Once you ask someone how they're doing, odds are that, at the very least, they'll ask the same to you. Use these responses to tell people who you are and how you're doing: Well / very well: Bem / muito bem (Baing / moo-ee-toh baing) Bad / very bad: Mal / muito mal (Mao / moo-ee-toh mao) More or less / so-so: Mais ou menos (Ma-ee-oh meh-nos) My name is...: Me chamo [your name] (Mee sham-oh) Nice to meet you: Prazer em conhecê-lo/a (Prah-zair eh con-yoo-see-lo/a) Note that conhecê-lo/a can end with either an o or an a. In these cases, when you're talking to a man, use o, and when you're talking to a woman, use a. We'll see this several more times in this article. Advertisement 1 Learn to talk about language. As a newcomer to the Portuguese language, you'll probably find yourself struggling to communicate from time to time. Don't worry — no one learns a new language overnight. Use these handy phrases to explain your situation: I don't speak Portuguese - Não falo Português - (Nah-oo fah-looh poor-too-gess) I speak English: Falo Inglês (Fah-looh inn-glesh) Do you speak English?: Fala inglês? (Fah-lah inn-gless) — formal Do you speak English?: Você fala inglês? (Voh-say fah-lah inn-gless) — informal I don't understand: Não percebo (Nah-oo pehr-say-boo) Could you repeat that?: Pode repetir? (Poh-day reh-peh-teer) 2 Learn social courtesies. Learning how to be polite in Portuguese is very important — you certainly don't want to tarnish your native country's reputation by accidentally being rude. Use these words and sayings to make sure you stay in the good graces of the people you talk to: Please: Por favor (Pooh-r fah-voh-r) Thank you: Obrigado/a (Oh-bree-gah-dooh/dah) — use the male form if you are male and the female form if you are female. Obrigado is the male form, and obrigada the female form. You're welcome: De nada (Dee nah-dah) — informal You're welcome: Não tem de quê (Nah-oomm tah-eehn the queh) — formal I'm sorry: Desculpe (Desh-cool-pee) 3 Learn to ask about other people (and respond.) Knowing how to ask a few basic questions about the Portuguese speakers you meet will go a long way towards making you new friends. Use these questions and responses to have a very basic conversation: What is your name?: Como o/a senhor/a se chama? (coh-moh sen-you'r-ah se shahm-ah) — formal. Note that, in this case, the male form of senhor has no "o" ending. What's your name?: Qual é o seu nome? (Coh eh-oh seh-oh no-mee) — informal My name is...: Me chamo [your name] (Mee sham-oh) Where are you from?: De onde o/a senhor/a é? (Djee own-djah oh/ah sen-you'r/ah eh) Where are you from?: De onde você é? (Djee own-djah voh-say eh) — informal I'm from...: Eu sou de [your hometown] (Ee-oh so-oo djee) What's happening / what's going on?: O que acontece? (Oo key ah-cone-teh-see-oo) 4 Learn to ask for help. Not every adventure goes as planned. If you ever find yourself in a situation where you need to ask for help from a Portuguese-speaking person, you'll be glad to know these life-savers: What time is it?: Que horas são? (Queh o-rah-sh sah-oomm) I'm lost: Estou perdido (Esh-toe per-dee-doo / Ee-toe per-djee-doo(in Brazil)) Can you help me, please?: Pode ajudar-me, por favor? (Po-deh ah-zh-dar-meh, por-fah-vor?) Help me!: Socorro! (Soh-coh-hoh!) — used if you are in danger Advertisement 1 Learn to ask general questions. Questions are an important part of everyday communication — they allow us to get information about the world around us. Learning the following question words will help you learn the details of every situation you find yourself in:[3] Who?: Quem? (Cang?) What?: O que? (Ooh kee?) When?: Quando? (Quan-doo?) Where?: Onde? (Own-djee?) Which?: Qual? (Quah-oo?) Why?: Porque? (Poohr-queh) Because: Porque (Poohr-queh) How much?: Quanto? (Kwan-toh) How much does this cost?: Quanto custa? (Kwan-toh coos-tah?) 2 Learn the names for specific types of people. Use the words below to describe the various people in your own life and others': Father: Pai (pa-ee) Mother: Mãe (ma-ee) — formal Mom/Mum: Mãe (muh-ma-ee) — informal Man: Homem (O-men) Woman: Mulher (Mooh-lyehr) Friend: Amigo/a (Ah-mee-goh/gah) Girlfriend: Namorada (Nah-mooh-rah-dah) Boyfriend: Namorado (Nah-mooh-rah-dooh) 3 Learn formal titles. In Portuguese, it's custom to call older people in positions of authority by their formal titles as a show of respect. While these formalities are usually dropped once two people become close friends, this can take some time, so as a rule of thumb, don't call people by their first names until invited. Mister: Senhor (Sen-you'r) — this can also be used as a formal "you" Misses: Senhora (Sen-you'r-ah) — used for young women (usually unmarried) Lady / madam / ma'am: Dona (Do-nah) — a formal title for women Doctor: Doutor/a (Doo-tohr/ah) — used for people with degrees beyond a bachelor's; not necessarily medical doctors. Professor: Professor/a (pro-fess-or-ah) — used for people with a PhD; not necessarily college educators. 4 Learn the names for common animals. Knowing animal names in Portuguese can be surprisingly useful, especially if you make a trip to the rainforests of Brazil or Angola. Below, you can find the words for some common animals you may see: Dog: Cão (Cah-oohm) Dog (only in Brazil): Cachorro (Cah-sho-hoo) Cat: Gato (Gah-tooh) Bird: Pássaro (Pah-sah-row) Fish: Peixe (Pay-shay) Monkey: Macaco (Mah-cah-coh) Lizard: Lagarto (Lah-gar-toh) Bug: Percevejo (Pair-sair-ve-zhoh) Spider: Aranha (Ah-rah-nyah) 5 Learn the parts of your body. Knowing how to describe the different parts of your body is a must if you find yourself in the unfortunate situation of being hurt or injured in a foreign country. Use these words to talk about your body:[4] Head: Cabeça (Cah-beh-sah) Arm: Braço (Brah-so) Leg: Perna (Pair-nah) Hand: Mão (Mah-oohm) Foot: Pé (Peh) Finger - Dedo - Deh-dooh Toe - Dedo (same as finger) — can also say "Dedo do pé" (Deh-dooh dooh peh), literally "finger of the foot." Eyes: Olhos (Ole-yus) Mouth: Boca (Boh-cah) Nose: Nariz (Nah-ree-se) Ears: Orelhas (Oh-rel-yase) 6 Learn to describe problems with your body. As noted above, being sick or injured in a foreign country is not very fun. Make your problems easier by learning these words for talking about how you aren't feeling well: I am hurt: Estou magado/a (Ees-toh mah-goo-ah-doo) My [body part] is broken: Meu [body part] está quebrado (May-oh brah-so es-tah kay-brah-doh) I am bleeding: Eu estou sangrando (Eh-oh oes-toh san-grand-oh) I feel bad: Me sinto mal (Mee seen-toh ma-oo) I feel sick: Sinto-me doente (Seen-toh-may doo-en-tee) I have a fever: Estou com febre (Ees-toh cohm feb-ray) I have a cough: Estou com tosse (Ees-toh cohm tohs-ay) I can't breathe: Eu não posso respirar (Eh-oh nah-oo po-so ray-spee-rar) Doctor!: Médico! (Meh-jee-coh) 7 Learn slang! Now that you've learned a good collection of Portuguese words and phrases, broaden your horizons by practicing some practical slang. Portuguese speakers in the real world don't use the sort of plain, dry language you'd find in a textbook. Each Portuguese-speaking country and region has its own slang words, colloquialisms, and sayings that speakers use to spice up their language. Below are just a few of the most common slang words (all of these are very informal.[5] Cool! (Only in Europe and Africa): Fixe (Feehs) Cool! (Only in Brazil): Legal (Lay-gah-oo) Wow!: Nossa (Nos-ah) Gosh!: Puxa / Puxa vida (Poo-sha / Poo-sha vee-dah) Shut up!: Cale-se! / Cala a boca! (Cah-lee say / cah la boh-ca) What's up?: Beleza? (Beh-leh-zah) Girl/boy buddy or mate: Parceira/o (Par-say-rah) Hot or attractive girl/boy: Gatinha/o (Gah-cheen-yah/yoh) Money, cash: Grana (Gran-ah) Foreigner: Gringo (Green-go) Advertisement Add New Question Question How do you say "the family"? a familia Question How do you say, "The month is March"? It's "O mês é março" with pronunciation: o meh-is eh marr-so. Question How do you say "come back"? If you're asking someone to come back, "volte." For example, "Por favor, volte." See more answers Ask a Question Advertisement Thanks Thanks Thanks Show More Tips The advice in this section is based on the lived experiences of wikiHow readers like you. If you have a helpful tip you'd like to share on wikiHow, please submit it in the field below. This language is very similar to Spanish. If you learn Spanish, you might have a easier time with Portuguese. Advertisement IP This article was co-authored by Israel Vieira Pereira, PhD. Israel Vieira Pereira is a native Brazilian Portuguese speaker. He works as a translator and proofreader. This article has been viewed 1,272,563 times. Co-authors: 52 Updated: May 12, 2025 Views: 1,272,563 Categories: World Languages Print Send fan mail to authors Thanks to all authors for creating a page that has been read 1,272,563 times. *We found all of it very helpful. We have lived in Portugal for many years and because virtually all the younger Portuguese speak English, it makes learning the language very difficult. The Algarve is like home from home for us (except for the weather). "... more Share your story

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