

**Your handy guide to  
everyday words and expressions**

# **Portuguese Phrases** FOR **DUMMIES®**

**A Reference for the Rest of Us!®**

- ✓ **Quick and easy approach gives you language fundamentals upfront**
- ✓ **Words to Know sections help you find the right words fast**
- ✓ **Pronunciation key helps you talk the talk**



**Karen Keller**  
*Brazilian Portuguese  
language instructor*

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# ***Portuguese Phrases For Dummies***

**by Karen Keller**



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Com certeza!

Fique tranquilo

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Tô instead of Estou

# Introduction

---

The world is shrinking. Communication technology is getting faster and faster, making it easier to contact people in what used to be exotic, faraway lands. Air travel has gotten a lot cheaper, too, so visiting these places has never been simpler. Experiencing **um pouco** (oong *poh*-koo; a little) of a new language is a great way to familiarize yourself with a region of the world or specific country. Not only does it allow you to communicate verbally, but knowing new words opens the door to understanding the specific culture itself.

If you're curious about language and want to know how to ask someone's name, ask for directions in a city, or talk about what your interests are, you've come to the right place. I'm not promising fluency here, but this book provides a great start.

This book tells you about the language spoken in Brazil. Thanks to Brazil's huge population — around 170 million or so — Portuguese is the fifth-most-spoken language in the world. (Flip ahead to Chapter 1 to read about which other countries in the world speak Portuguese.)

Brazilian Portuguese is specific because the accent and some basic words are unique to Brazil. And the country itself is a pretty popular destination these days, with its earned reputation as a land of fun-loving, generous people.

A bonus to knowing Brazilian Portuguese is that it can help you to understand a little French, Spanish, and Italian, too. They're all Romance languages, which means many words among these languages sound similar.

Brazilian Portuguese is very lyrical. The sounds can be difficult to make for nonnative speakers, but speaking Portuguese is fun after you get into it. I advise you to treat yourself while you're reading the book: Buy some Brazilian music. You'll fall in love with the sounds, and the background music adds great ambience.

## **About This Book**

Here's the good news: This book isn't a class you have to drag yourself to. It's a reference book, so use it at your leisure. You're the boss. You may choose to just leaf through, glancing only at chapters and pages that grab your attention. Or you can read the whole thing from start to finish. (From finish to start is okay, too — no one's looking.)

The first few chapters may be helpful to read first, though, because they explain some basic information about pronunciation and explain words that appear throughout the book.

# Conventions Used in This Book

To make the book easy to read and understand, I've set up a few stylistic rules:

- ✓ Web addresses appear in monofont.
- ✓ Portuguese terms are set in **boldface** to make them stand out.
- ✓ Pronunciations and definitions, which are shown in parentheses, follow the terms the first time they appear in a section.
- ✓ Within the pronunciation, the part of the word that's stressed is shown in *italics*.
- ✓ Knowing key words and phrases is important in the quest to speak a new language. I collect important words and put them in a special blackboard-shaped "Words to Know" box.
- ✓ Verb conjugations (lists that show you the forms of a verb) are given in tables in this order: the *I* form, the *you* form, the *he/she* form, the *we* form, and the *they* form. Pronunciations follow in a second column.

Here's an example of a conjugation chart for the word **ser** (seh; to be). Because the subjects always come in the same order, you can see that words in this chart mean *I am*, *you are*, *he/she is*, *we are*, and *they are*.

<b><i>Conjugation</i></b>	<b><i>Pronunciation</i></b>
eu sou	<i>eh-oooh soh</i>
você é	<i>voh-seh eh</i>
ele/ela	<i>eh-lee/eh-la eh</i>
nós somos	<i>nohz soh-mooz</i>
eles/elas são	<i>eh-leez/eh-lahz sah-oooh</i>

## **Foolish Assumptions**

To write this book, I had to imagine who my readers would be. Yes, you! I think if you've picked up this book, you're probably a pretty open-minded person who enjoys learning. That's excellent. Because the first step to absorbing new information is wanting to absorb it.

Here are some other things I'm imagining about you:

- ✓ You don't want to memorize long lists of vocabulary to know Portuguese.
- ✓ You want to get your feet wet in Portuguese while having fun at the same time.
- ✓ You're interested in learning about Brazilian culture as well as its language.

✓ You're not looking for a book to make you fluent in Portuguese but one that instead gives you bite-size information that provides a solid base to understanding the language.

## Icons Used in This Book

Drawings and symbols always liven things up a bit, don't they? Here are some icons that point you to important information:



This icon shows you where you can find some fascinating tidbits that highlight either a linguistic aspect or give travel tips. Tips can save you time and frustration.



This handy icon pops up whenever you run across a bit of information that you really should remember after you close the book, whether it's about the Portuguese language or Brazil in general.



Languages are full of quirks that may trip you up if you're not prepared for them. This icon points to discussions of these weird grammar rules.



The "Cultural Wisdom" snippets help give insight into Brazilian culture.

## Where to Go from Here

When you have a spare moment, pop open the book. All you need is a curious mind and the openness to learn about

Brazil. Above all, don't think of reading the book as a chore. It's meant to be relaxing and enjoyable.

Feel free to complement this book with other activities that enhance your knowledge of Portuguese, like entering a Portuguese-language chat room on the Internet or having Brazilian music on in the background so you can hear the sounds of the language.

Oh, and **boa sorte** (*boh-ah soh-chee*; good luck)!

# Chapter 1

## Say It How? Speaking Portuguese

---

### *In This Chapter*

- ▶ Recognizing what English and Portuguese have in common
  - ▶ Spell it out: Saying the alphabet
  - ▶ Looking at vowels and consonants: Basic Portuguese sounds
- 

**B**elieve it or not, the Portuguese language comes in different versions. Pronunciation of Brazilian Portuguese and Portuguese from Portugal, say, is totally different. Some Brazilian tourists in Portugal report that they don't understand a word! I think it's a little more of a stretch than the differences between American and British English, just to give you an idea. But if a group of people from Texas, South Africa, and Scotland got together, they'd probably scratch their heads when trying to understand each other, too!

Written Portuguese, on the other hand, is very standard, especially when it's in a newspaper or some formal publication that doesn't use slang. A Brazilian can understand a Portuguese newspaper or read the works of

Portugal's Nobel Prize-winning author José Saramago, no problem.

In this book, I focus on Brazilian Portuguese, as opposed to the Portuguese spoken in Portugal and countries in Africa — Cape Verde (islands off northwestern Africa), Mozambique (on the coast of southeast Africa), Guinea-Bissau (in western Africa), Angola (in southwestern Africa), and São Tomé and Príncipe (islands off western Africa).

## **Exploring the Roots of Portuguese**

The beautiful Portuguese language belongs to a linguistic family known as the Romance languages. Back when the Roman Empire was around, Rome was in the center of a wide swath of Europe, northern Africa, and parts of Asia. With Rome's influence came its language — Latin.

And the closer a place was to Rome, the more likely it was to absorb Latin into its language. This was the case with Portugal — where the Portuguese language originates — as well as with places like France, Spain, and even Romania.

So how did Portuguese get all the way to Brazil? A Portuguese conquistador named Pedro Álvares Cabral landed in modern-day Brazil on April 22, 1500, and is the person credited for having “discovered” Brazil. Many indigenous people were already living in the area, of

course, many of whom spoke a language that's part of a language family today called **Tupi-Guarani** (*too-pee gwah-dah-nee*).

Brazilian Portuguese uses some Tupi-Guarani words. Mostly the words appear as names of towns in Brazil — for example, **Ubatuba** (*ooh-bah-too-bah*) is a pretty beach town in São Paulo state (it's nicknamed **Uba-Chuva** because **chuva** [*shoo-vah*] means *rain* and it rains there a lot!). Tupi-Guarani words also name native plants and animals. “Armadillo,” for example, is **tatu** (*tah-too*). After you get used to speaking Portuguese, telling whether a word is Latin-based or Tupi-Guarani-based is pretty easy.

Still other words in Brazilian Portuguese are based on African languages, from the vast influence that African slaves had on creating modern-day Brazil and its culture.

What you may not realize is that the English language has a lot of Latin influence. Linguists consider English to be a Germanic language, and it technically is. But due to the on-and-off French occupations of the British Isles, some of those French (Latin-based) words rubbed off on English. Some people say as much as 40 percent of English is Latin-based.

That's great news for you. It means many Portuguese words have the same root as English words. The *root* of a word is usually the middle of the word — those few sounds that really define what the word means. Some examples of Portuguese words that resemble English include **experimento** (*eh-speh-dee-men-toh*; experiment),

**presidente** (pdeh-zee-*dang*-chee; president), **economia** (eh-koh-noh-*mee*-ah; economy), **decisão** (ah deh-see-*zah*-ooh; decision), **computador** (kom-*poo*-tah-*doh*; computer), **liberdade** (lee-beh-*dah*-jee; liberty), and **banana** (bah-*nah*-nah). And that's only to name a few!

Another benefit: **O português** (ooh poh-too-*geh*z; Portuguese), like all Latin languages, uses the English alphabet. Some funny accent marks appear on some of the vowels, but they just add to the mystique of Portuguese. Learning Portuguese isn't the same as learning Japanese or Arabic, which use totally different alphabets.

Finally, due to the influence the United States has had on the world recently — in some ways greater than Rome's ancient influence — many English words are used commonly in Portuguese, with no adaptation in the way they're written. These words include modern-technology words like **e-mail** (ee-*may*-oh) and also basic words like **shopping** (*shoh*-ping) or **show** (shoh; show/performance).

## Reciting Your ABCs

Brazilian Portuguese sounds very strange at first. I myself thought it sounded Russian, back when I didn't understand a **palavra** (pah-*lahv*-dah; word)! A few of the sounds are a little hard to imitate, because people don't use them in English. But Brazilians often understand you even if you don't say words perfectly. Many think a foreign **sotaque** (soh-*tah*-kee; accent) is charming, so don't worry about it.

But the way the sounds correspond to the written letters is very systematic in Brazilian Portuguese — more so than in English. After you get used to the way a letter or combination of letters sounds, you get the hang of pronunciations pretty quickly. There are few surprises in **a pronúncia** (ah pdoh-*noon*-see-ah; pronunciation) after you get the basics down.

At the beginning of this chapter, did you notice how the pronunciation is shown in parentheses after the Portuguese word? That's how this book shows the pronunciation of all new words. The italicized part is where you put the emphasis on the word. In "Words to Know" lists, the part you emphasize is underlined rather than italicized.

Are you ready to learn the basics of **português**? You can start with the alphabet. Practice spelling out your name:

- ✓ **a** (ah)
- ✓ **b** (beh)
- ✓ **c** (seh)
- ✓ **d** (deh)
- ✓ **e** (eh)
- ✓ **f** (*eh-fee*)
- ✓ **g** (zheh)
- ✓ **h** (ah-*gah*)
- ✓ **i** (ee)
- ✓ **j** (*zhoh-tah*)