

Portuguese A2

— What to Study

Level: **A2 (Waystage)** • Language: **Portuguese** • Audience: **Learners**

A2 is where Portuguese opens up in time. At A1 everything happened now; at A2 you can tell someone what you did at the weekend, describe what your childhood was like and make plans for next month. This guide follows Brazilian Portuguese and points out where Portugal differs.

The Common European Framework describes A2 as being able to understand sentences and frequently used expressions related to areas of immediate relevance — basic personal and family information, shopping, local geography, employment; to communicate in simple and routine tasks requiring a simple and direct exchange of information on familiar matters; and to describe in simple terms aspects of your background, immediate environment and matters of immediate need.

Grammar to master

The pretérito perfeito. The past tense for completed actions: *Ontem eu comi pizza, Nós viajamos para o Rio.*

- Regular endings for *-ar*, *-er* and *-ir* verbs
- The irregulars you use every day: *ser* and *ir* share one form — *fui, foi, fomos, foram* — plus *tive, estive, fiz, pude, disse, vi, vim, quis, soube, pus*

The pretérito imperfeito. The past tense for description, background and habit: *Quando eu era criança, morava em São Paulo.* The *imperfeito* sets the scene; the *perfeito* moves the story — *Estava chovendo quando eu saí.*

Actions in progress. Brazil uses *estar* plus the gerund: *Estou estudando, Estava dormindo.* Portugal usually says *estou a estudar.*

Object pronouns. This is where written and spoken Brazilian Portuguese differ most.

- Standard forms: *me, te, o / a, lhe, nos, os / as, lhes*
- In Brazilian speech the pronoun usually comes before the verb, even at the start of a sentence: *Me dá um café?, Te ligo amanhã*
- In everyday Brazilian speech *ele* and *ela* are often used as objects: *Eu vi ele ontem.* Understand it, but use *Eu o vi* or *Eu vi-o* in writing
- Portugal puts the pronoun after the verb in simple statements: *Chama-me amanhã*

More tools.

- Reflexive verbs: *levantar-se*, *chamar-se*, *vestir-se* — in Brazil usually *Eu me levanto cedo*
- Comparatives: *mais / menos ... (do) que*, and the irregular *melhor* and *pior*
- The imperative as used in Brazil, which usually borrows the subjunctive forms: *Fale mais devagar*, *Venha aqui*
- The simple future — *farei*, *farei* — to recognise in writing; in speech, keep using *ir* plus the infinitive
- Time expressions: *há dois anos* (ago), *faz um ano que...*, *desde*

Vocabulary areas

Aim for roughly 1,000 to 1,500 active words, still learning each noun with its article.

- Past events: the weekend, holidays, childhood, life stages
- Travel: booking, the bus station and airport, hotels, delays
- Health: the body, symptoms, the doctor's and the pharmacy
- Shopping: clothes and sizes, returns, comparing prices
- Housing: looking for a flat, rooms and furniture, neighbours
- Work and study: the working day, appointments, simple emails
- Celebrations, invitations and gifts
- Weather and the seasons in more detail
- Directions and describing where things are

What you should be able to do

- Describe what you did last weekend or on your last holiday
- Describe a place or a person from your past using the *imperfecto*
- Make, change and cancel an appointment by phone or message
- Explain a simple health problem to a doctor or pharmacist
- Give a reason with *porque* and a simple opinion with *Eu acho que...*
- Compare two things: flats, products, cities, plans
- Buy a bus or plane ticket and deal with a simple problem such as a delay
- Write a short informal email or message about everyday matters
- Understand the main point of short, clear announcements and messages

Common difficulties

Perfeito or imperfeito? Ask whether the action is a completed event that moves the story on, or background: a description, a habit, something in progress.

Ser and ir in the past. *Fui* means both "I was" and "I went". Context always makes it clear: *Fui ao cinema* versus *Fui professor*.

Spoken versus written pronouns. Brazilians write *Eu o vi* and say *Eu vi ele*. Neither is wrong in its place; the mistake is using casual speech in a formal email.

If you speak Spanish. The past tenses map closely onto Spanish, which helps — but the vocabulary traps keep coming. *Borracha* is an eraser or rubber, *pegar* means to take or catch, and *apelido* is a nickname in Brazil.

How to know you are ready for B1

You are ready when you can tell a simple story in the past — mixing *perfeito* and *imperfeito* mostly correctly — without stopping to build every verb, and when you can hold a short conversation on everyday topics that you have not prepared. If you still avoid talking about the past, consolidate A2 before moving on.

Next step

Move on to the Portuguese B1 guide, which adds the subjunctive — including the future subjunctive, one of the language's most distinctive features.

Written by GongbuLeng. Aligned with the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) A2 descriptors. For a CEFR-aligned certificate at this level, see the CIPLE exam from CAPLE at the University of Lisbon (European Portuguese). Brazil's official certificate is Celpe-Bras, run by INEP.