

The Sounds of Brazilian Portuguese (BP)

Quick Reference Guide

This is a brief reference and guide to BP sounds and the main pitfalls for non-native speakers. Transcriptions are based on the rules for the standard pronunciation of the language.

THE “EXTRA VOWEL” OR EPENTHETIC [ɪ]



Epenthesis is the insertion of one or more sounds into a word. The epenthetic vowel [ɪ] is commonly found:

- Within consonant combinations or clusters and at the end of foreign words
submeter [su bɪ me 'ter] (to submit)
- When the vowel /e/ combines with /m/ or /n/ (pronounced as the diphthong [ɛ:ɪ])
também [tɛ̃ 'bɛ:ɪ] (also)
- Often before fricative consonants found at the end of words
dez [dɛ:ɪs] (ten)
três [trɛ:ɪs] (three)

The epenthetic sound is used to facilitate the pronunciation of syllable structures. It is almost imperceptible to the ear and never represented in writing.

/ e / IS PRONOUNCED [ɪ] / o / IS PRONOUNCED [ʊ]



- In monosyllabic words or when by itself
dô [dʊ] (of the)
que [kɪ] (that)
- When unstressed at the end of words
sobre [so brɪ] (about/above/over)
- Sometimes in pre-tonic position (/e/)
menino [mɪ 'ni nʊ] (boy)

/ t / IS PRONOUNCED [tʃ] / d / IS PRONOUNCED [dʒ]



- Before vowel /i/
tia [tʃi:ɛ] (aunt)
dia [dʒi:ɛ] (day)
- Before unstressed /e/ in the final position
gente [ʒɛ tʃɪ] (people)
- When unstressed in the initial position
teatro [tʃi 'a tʃɪ] (theater)
- When in monosyllabic words
de [dʒɪ] (of/from)
do [dʊ] (from/to)
te [tʃɪ] (you)

NASAL SOUNDS



There are five nasal vowel sounds in BP

[ɛ̃][ẽ][ɨ̃][õ] and [ũ]

They are formed by the combination of:

vowels + /~/

vowels + /m/ or /n/

V O W E L + / M / O R / N /

- A vowel is usually nasalized when followed by /m/ or /n/
onda [ˈõ dɐ] (wave)
- However, when in separate syllables, depending on word stress, the vowel will not be nasalized
amor [a 'mor] (love)
amigo [a 'mi gʊ] (friend)
- There is no closing of the lips at the of the articulation of the sound /m/
amigo [a 'mi gʊ] (friend)
- The second vowel moves towards a [ŋ] without a full articulation of this sound

NASAL DIPHTHONG

/ ã o /



- Both vowels are nasalized even though the tilde is only on the first vowel
- No closing of the lips at the end of the articulation of the sound
- First vowel sound is longer and moves towards the /u/ vowel sound
- Pronounced [ɛ̃:ʊ]
coração [ko ra 'sɛ̃:ʊ] (heart)

Q U E S T I O N S ?

CONTACT

juliana.franco@me.com

www.julianafrancosoprano.com

www.singinginbrazilianportuguese.com



This material is under copyright. Please make contact before reproducing or using it.
Dr. Franco has no relevant financial or nonfinancial relationship to disclose.