



FOR SPANISH SPEAKERS · FREE GUIDE

# From Español to Português: 6 Real Patterns to Unlock Portuguese Fast

Ya hablas español. Eso significa que ya llevas la mitad del camino recorrido. This guide shows you exactly which sound and spelling changes turn the Spanish you already speak into real Portuguese — plus the traps to watch for along the way.

## **Fala Portuguese.**

Free resource from the Fala Portuguese Resource Library — [falaportuguese.com](https://falaportuguese.com)

# What's Inside

- 6 sound & spelling patterns that instantly unlock hundreds of words
- A quick-reference conversion table you can scan in seconds
- The "false friends" that trip up Spanish speakers the most
- Real example words for every single pattern — not just theory

## BEFORE YOU START

## You're Not Starting From Zero

Spanish and Portuguese share roughly 89% of their vocabulary at the root level. That's not a coincidence — both languages grew out of Vulgar Latin on the Iberian Peninsula, splitting apart only a few hundred years ago. Because of that shared history, most of the differences between the two languages aren't random. They follow patterns.

Learn the patterns below, and you'll be able to guess — correctly — the Portuguese version of hundreds of Spanish words you already know, without ever having seen them in Portuguese before. That's the fastest possible head start into this language.

A quick note on pronunciation: even when the spelling is nearly identical, Portuguese sounds noticeably different from Spanish — nasal vowels, softer consonants, and a very different rhythm, especially in European Portuguese. This guide focuses on the written patterns. Pair it with real listening practice so your ear catches up to your reading.

## 01 • SUFFIX PATTERN

### -ción → -ção

This is the single highest-value pattern in this entire guide. Any Spanish noun ending in -ción almost always becomes -ção in Portuguese — same meaning, same gender (feminine), nearly identical pronunciation.

| ESPAÑOL      | PORTUGUÊS   | WHAT CHANGES     |
|--------------|-------------|------------------|
| comunicación | comunicação | communication    |
| información  | informação  | information      |
| educación    | educação    | education        |
| nación       | nação       | nation           |
| estación     | estação     | station / season |
| conversación | conversação | conversation     |
| situación    | situação    | situation        |

Trick: This one pattern alone unlocks well over a thousand cognate nouns. If a Spanish word ends in -ción, guess -ção first — you'll be right the overwhelming majority of the time.

## 02 • SUFFIX PATTERN

### -dad → -dade

Spanish abstract nouns ending in -dad become -dade in Portuguese. Same family as the English "-ty" ending (city / cidade, university / universidade).

| ESPAÑOL     | PORTUGUÊS     | WHAT CHANGES |
|-------------|---------------|--------------|
| ciudad      | cidade        | city         |
| verdad      | verdade       | truth        |
| libertad    | liberdade     | liberty      |
| universidad | universidade  | university   |
| dificultad  | dificuldade   | difficulty   |
| posibilidad | possibilidade | possibility  |

Trick: Watch the doubled letters: posibilidad has one "s", but possibilidade in Portuguese takes two.

## 03 • SOUND SHIFT

### ue → o (diphthong simplification)

Where Spanish keeps the Latin diphthong ue in a stressed syllable, Portuguese usually flattens it back down to a plain o. This is one of the most common traps for Spanish speakers, because the words look almost unrecognizable at first glance — until you know the rule.

| ESPAÑOL   | PORTUGUÊS | WHAT CHANGES        |
|-----------|-----------|---------------------|
| encuentro | encontro  | encounter / meeting |
| fuego     | fogo      | fire                |
| puerta    | porta     | door                |
| cuerpo    | corpo     | body                |
| nuevo     | novo      | new                 |
| puerto    | porto     | port                |
| escuela   | escola    | school              |

Trick: Say the Spanish word out loud, then just drop the "u" sound from the diphthong. Encuentro becomes en-contro almost automatically once you're listening for it.

#### 04 • SOUND SHIFT

### ie → e (diphthong simplification)

Same idea as above, but for the ie diphthong — Portuguese usually simplifies it down to a single e.

| ESPAÑOL  | PORTUGUÊS | WHAT CHANGES   |
|----------|-----------|----------------|
| tierra   | terra     | land / earth   |
| viento   | vento     | wind           |
| diente   | dente     | tooth          |
| siempre  | sempre    | always         |
| tiempo   | tempo     | time / weather |
| invierno | inverno   | winter         |

Trick: Together, patterns 03 and 04 cover a huge share of everyday Portuguese vocabulary. Once these two click, whole sentences start looking familiar.

#### 05 • CONSONANT SHIFT

### Spanish h → Portuguese f

This is a deeper, older pattern: many Spanish words that start with a silent h come from Latin words that originally started with f. Spanish dropped that f-sound centuries ago; Portuguese kept it. The result: a whole family of words that look completely different but share the exact same root.

| ESPAÑOL     | PORTUGUÊS     | WHAT CHANGES    |
|-------------|---------------|-----------------|
| hijo / hija | filho / filha | son / daughter  |
| hacer       | fazer         | to do / to make |
| hablar      | falar         | to speak        |
| harina      | farinha       | flour           |
| hierro      | ferro         | iron            |
| hambre      | fome          | hunger          |

Trick: This pattern is less predictable than the others — treat it as a family to recognize, not a rule to apply automatically. But once you've seen it, *hablar/falar* and *hacer/fazer* stop feeling random.

## 06 • SPELLING SHIFT

### ñ → nh & ll → lh

Spanish uses ñ and ll for sounds that Portuguese spells with nh and lh. The sounds themselves are close cousins, so once you know the swap, both reading and pronunciation get much easier.

| ESPAÑOL | PORTUGUÊS | WHAT CHANGES                        |
|---------|-----------|-------------------------------------|
| señor   | senhor    | sir / mister                        |
| niño    | menino    | boy / child (irregular, but common) |
| español | espanhol  | Spanish                             |
| llave   | chave     | key                                 |
| lluvia  | chuva     | rain                                |
| familia | família   | family                              |

Trick: ñ→nh is very reliable. ll is trickier — it sometimes maps to Portuguese "ch" instead (llave/chave, lluvia/chuva), so treat ll as "expect a consonant change" rather than one fixed rule.

## WATCH OUT

### The False Friends That Trip Up Spanish Speakers

Because Spanish and Portuguese are so close, it's easy to assume every similar-looking word means the same thing. Most of the time it does. These common ones don't — and they're exactly the kind of mistake that's easy to make out loud in a real conversation.

| ESPAÑOL    | PORTUGUÊS         | WHAT CHANGES                                                           |
|------------|-------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| embarazada | embaraçada        | pregnant / embarrassed (Sp. embarazada = pregnant, not embarrassed!)   |
| apellido   | sobrenome         | surname (Pt. "apelido" means nickname, not surname — the reverse trap) |
| largo      | comprido / longo  | long (Pt. "largo" means wide, not long)                                |
| oficina    | escritório        | office (Pt. "oficina" means repair shop / garage)                      |
| borracho/a | —                 | drunk (Pt. "borracha" means eraser)                                    |
| polvo      | —                 | dust (Pt. "polvo" means octopus)                                       |
| propina    | propina / gorjeta | tip (Pt. "propina" can also mean tuition fee in Portugal)              |

Trick: when a word feels too perfectly identical for something personal or emotional (pregnancy, embarrassment, family terms), double-check it. False friends cluster around exactly those topics.

## QUICK REFERENCE

# Your One-Page Cheat Sheet

Keep this table nearby while you read or listen to Portuguese for the first few weeks.

| ESPAÑOL            | PORTUGUÊS | WHAT CHANGES                      |
|--------------------|-----------|-----------------------------------|
| -ción              | -ção      | comunicación → comunicação        |
| -dad               | -dade     | ciudad → cidade                   |
| ue (stressed)      | o         | encuentro → encontro              |
| ie (stressed)      | e         | tierra → terra                    |
| h- (from Latin f-) | f-        | hablar → falar                    |
| ñ                  | nh        | señor → senhor                    |
| ll                 | lh / ch   | familia → família, lluvia → chuva |
| el / la            | o / a     | definite articles                 |
| -mente             | -mente    | adverbs stay identical            |

Ready to go further than word tricks? Spelling patterns will get you reading Portuguese fast — but real fluency comes from speaking it out loud with a native speaker who can catch your Spanish habits before they become Portuguese habits. Take our free placement test at [falaportuguese.com](https://falaportuguese.com) and we'll build you a personalized workbook and class plan around exactly where you're starting from.