FREE GUIDE · COMPANIES

Portuguese for your team

A short guide for HR and team leads: why European Portuguese helps international staff, what level to aim for and how to organise lessons that work.

Free HR PT-PT

Ora Bem Portuguese

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01 Why it matters

Many international teams in Portugal work in English. Life outside work, though, happens in Portuguese: the landlord, the doctor, the children's school, the neighbours, Finanças (the tax office). Colleagues switch to English to be polite, but lunch, jokes and small talk stay in Portuguese.

- **Settling in.** Basic Portuguese makes the first months less stressful and more independent.
- **Belonging.** Speaking a little Portuguese with colleagues and clients helps build trust.
- **Paperwork.** Some residence and nationality procedures ask for proof of Portuguese at A2 level.
- **Business with Portugal.** Teams abroad that greet, call and write in Portuguese can come across as closer.

These are the reasons people give for learning. This guide makes no claims about measurable effects on retention or productivity: no reliable data was found for small teams, so it is better to agree your own indicators (see section 5).

02 What level to aim for

A1	First weeks: greetings, numbers, shops, cafés, directions, introducing yourself.
A2	Everyday life: doctor, simple paperwork, talking about work and family. The level asked for by some residence and nationality procedures (check the current rules for each case).
B1	Taking part in simple meetings, following colleagues, writing routine emails.
B2	Working in Portuguese: discussing, negotiating, presenting.

European Portuguese is not the same as Brazilian Portuguese: pronunciation, vocabulary and forms of address differ. For staff in Portugal, or working with Portuguese clients, it makes sense to learn the European variety from the start.

03 How long it takes

It depends mostly on regular contact with the language and on the languages a person already speaks (Spanish, Italian or French speakers usually progress faster).

As a rough guide, not a promise: with two lessons a week plus 20–30 minutes a day of practice, many adults handle everyday situations at around A2 within a year. Understanding fast spoken Portuguese is usually the slowest skill.

04 Formats that work

- **One-to-one lessons** (55 or 85 min by video call): the most flexible option, built around each person's role and timetable.
- **Small groups of colleagues** at a similar level: a fixed time agreed with the team; works best with 3–4 people.
- **Short intensive sessions**: for example, “survival Portuguese” for new arrivals, or a session on meetings and phone calls.

Practical tip: schedule lessons inside working hours when possible, at a fixed time every week. Attendance tends to drop when lessons compete with deadlines in the evening.

05 Measuring progress

- A level check at the start and every 3–6 months.
- Attendance (a monthly summary for HR, if agreed).
- Can-do goals agreed with each person: “I can call the clinic and book an appointment”, “I can follow the weekly team meeting”.
- A short anonymous feedback form after the first month.

06 Checklist before you start

- Who takes part, and why (new arrivals, client-facing staff, everyone)?
- What level should each person reach, and by when?
- One-to-one, groups, or both?
- Lessons inside or outside working hours?
- Who in the company is the contact person?
- How will you measure progress (section 5)?

ORA BEM…

Ready to talk?

Ora Bem Portuguese teaches European Portuguese online, with English or Spanish as support languages. Tell us how many people, their approximate levels and what they need Portuguese for, and we will send a written proposal.

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