

Open and closed e and o

In Brazilian Portuguese, the letter *e* can have three different pronunciations: open, close, and reduced.

1. The reduced pronunciation occurs when the letter *e* comes at the end of a word. It is pronounced as in the English word *bungee* (e.g. *tarde, noite, fale*).
2. The close pronunciation can occur in either the stressed syllable of a word or an unstressed syllable (but not at the end of the word). The close *e* has no exact equivalent in English, but it comes close to the *a* in “sale” (e.g. *lê, ele, peso*).
3. The open pronunciation occurs only when the letter *e* is in the stressed syllable of a word. It is pronounced as in the English word “get” (e.g. *pé, ela, janela*).

When the letter *e* carries a written accent, the open pronunciation is indicated by an acute accent (*é*) and the close pronunciation by a circumflex accent (*ê*). Often, however, there is no accent mark, so it is necessary to develop a feel for the correct pronunciation. This will come with time and a sensitive ear.

Reduced e

fale
cante
tarde
aparte
pode
açóite

Close e

sê (*be*)
pê (*the letter p*)
zê (*the letter z*)
sede (*thirst*)
seco (*dry*)

Open e

sé (*cathedral*)
pé (*foot*)
Zé (*Joe*)
sede (*headqtrs.*)
seco (*I dry*)

Like the letter *e*, the letter *o* in Brazilian Portuguese can have three different pronunciations: open, close, and reduced.

1. The reduced pronunciation occurs when the letter *o* comes at the end of a word. It is pronounced like a *u* (e.g. *falo, canto, passo*).
2. The close pronunciation can occur in either the stressed syllable of a word or an unstressed syllable (but not at the end of the word). The close *o* has no exact equivalent in English, but it comes close to the *o* in “sole” (e.g. *avô, pôde, doze*).
3. The open pronunciation occurs only when the letter *o* is in the stressed syllable of a word. It also has no exact English equivalent; it comes close to the *a* of “call”, but with the lips more rounded (e.g. *avó, pode, nós*).

When the letter *o* carries a written accent, the open pronunciation is indicated by an acute accent (*ó*) and the close pronunciation by a circumflex accent (*ô*). Often, however, there is no accent mark, so it is necessary to develop a feel for the correct pronunciation.

Reduced o

falo
canto
trabalho
faço
passado
terraço

Close o

avô (*grandfather*)
pôde (*he could*)
poço (*well of water*)
boto (*porpoise*)
doze (*twelve*)

Open o

avó (*grandmother*)
pode (*he can*)
posso (*I can*)
boto (*I put*)
dose (*dose*)