



MY OWN TIPS

LANGUAGE LEARNING TIPS TO
AUTONOMOUSLY STRENGTHEN
YOUR LANGUAGE LEARNING



AGA KHAN FOUNDATION
Portugal

LEARNING AS A TOOL FOR GROWTH

Learning through others is how we grow in our everyday lives – increasing our general knowledge, adapting by watching the ways others interact, learning about another culture, observing how people do things at work to strengthen our skills, are just a few of the examples. At the same time, learning is a lot more fun and fruitful when we are learning with others.

Moreover, it is not always possible to be with others in order to learn with them, but there are things we can do by ourselves to strengthen our capacities and confidence to learn more. Every day, our surroundings provide us many opportunities to strengthen our learning.

YOU CAN TRAIN YOURSELF

This workbook will not teach you Portuguese. It is, however, intended to provide ideas of easily adaptable **habits in your daily life that can help you to keep on learning the language in simple, cost-free ways.** You can teach yourself how to keep on learning. And this strengthens individual confidence, sense of empowerment and pride, and the ability to further practice the language we are learning. Empty spaces on this workbook **were left for you to write your own language learning notes** and drawings, to personalise it into your tool for growth.

LANGUAGE ENABLES INTEGRATION

Language enables us to work and actively engage in the (new) country we are living in. It also helps us to socialise and to feel more confident at getting to know more about the culture(s) of the place where we are now restarting our life, and to build a sense of belonging to a geographical context. Familiarising with the musicality and specific sounds of the language exposes us to pronunciation and communication styles.

THANK YOU

AKF Portugal staff crossed paths with and listened to many people of different geographical and cultural backgrounds about their experiences of interactions and language learning. This production stems from collating their ideas, tips and advice on what they are doing in their daily lives. We would, therefore, like to heartfully thank the following people for their generous suggestions – **they are all a true tribute to how each one of us can enable learning,** and of how motivation and dedication can truly be empowering: Aslam, Bimala, Dev, Cláudia, Ghulam, Imtiaz, Jannat, Maina, Mehejabin, Sachef, Sangita, Sunita, Tulsi, are but a few who kindly shared their thoughts during this project. Finally, one size does not fit all, and you may find certain suggestions are not apt in your case, and others may work for you to gain confidence to expand your learnings. **So take your pick and please, enjoy learning!**

Title: My own Tips - Language learning tips to autonomously strengthen your language learning
Editor: Aga Khan Foundation Portugal
Edition: 1st Edition (April 2020)



SETTING THE FOUNDATIONS FOR YOUR LANGUAGE KNOWLEDGE

A few background elements are instrumental when you are intentionally trying to learn a new language. In actual fact, a lot depends on your own attitude and on your aptitude, both of which you can nurture in different ways to enhance your language learning potential.

1. REPETITION IS REINFORCEMENT

Language learning becomes more solid and sustainable by practicing. By listening to our own selves and **by testing how to pronounce something out** loud, we can practise many times, until we get a sentence right, understand it ourselves, and make it

understood by the person we are talking to. It is normal to feel shy if we think we are not pronouncing a word or sentence correctly. It is also normal that we will not pronounce it correctly until we have tried and tried, and tried again to say it out loud repeatedly. And when we are listening attentively, we become capable of correcting ourselves.

2. DO NOT GET DISCOURAGED, YOU CAN DO IT!

Do not lose confidence. By repeating many times you will eventually feel more confident at saying that word or sentence and managing to pronounce it in a way that others understand.

Feel proud of practicing! You may want to start by practicing by yourself **in front of a mirror** at first, to see how you are placing your tongue to pronounce the word / sentence, until you start practising it with others. And then try to speak – they say practice makes perfect!

IF PEOPLE KNOW YOU ARE IN A LEARNING PROCESS AND KNOW YOUR DESIRE IS TO COMMUNICATE, IN MOST CASES THEY WILL BE TOLERANT TO YOUR MISPRONUNCIATIONS, OR MAYBE EVEN CORRECT YOU – WHICH IN TURN HELPS YOU LEARN. IF YOU TRY TO PRONOUNCE THE SAME WORD AGAIN STRAIGHT AWAY!

3. ENQUIRING MIND

As you walk around in the city/town, you may hear people on the street saying some regular sentences. Be curious and enquire as to what they mean, make a note of them, and test saying them yourself. Hear yourself say it out loud.

4. THE KNOWLEDGE YOU ALREADY HAVE

Think about the words you already know in Portuguese language. Write down how you actually pronounce them: use any **symbol** that

will help you remember **pronunciation** as this is just for your own reference, or use your own alphabet to be able to read it back your own way. Then, research and make a note of how to write in Portuguese language.

THE WORD I KNOW, AND ITS MEANING	HOW I PERSONALLY PRONOUNCE IT	HOW IT IS WRITTEN IN PORTUGUESE

5. MISPRONUNCIATIONS ARE LEARNINGS

If we say something out loud, and someone says it is not correct, this provides a perfect opportunity for learning. Only by saying it wrong

a few times do we learn to practice until it comes out right! Try joining words that convey the meaning you require - even if the verb tense isn't correct what is important is to **transmit the general message**.

6. HEARING SOMETHING INTRIGUING

If you identify a word you don't know when someone is talking to you, make a note of it (or of how it sounds) to ask someone you feel comfortable with how they may write the word.

Search on the internet (or by asking different people) what the word means. Also ask them for **an example of a sentence in which they would use that word**, and write it down. This helps you to understand the use of language and its function in a conversation / in communication with others.

WHAT I AM HEARING	WHAT IT MEANS	HOW I SAY IT (IN MY OWN SYMBOLS/WRITING/DRAWING)	PORTUGUESE SPELLING

7. WORDS (OR SOUNDS!) AND STRUCTURES IN COMMON

A simple way to root your learnings and to start reinforcing your confidence is to think about all the words and sentences in your own language and in Portuguese language that **have a similar sound**.

HERE ARE SOME EXAMPLES OF WORDS THAT CONVEY EVEN A SIMILAR MEANING:

WORD	MEANING	HOW TO WRITE IT IN PORTUGUES
Cha	The word tea has a similar sound in Portuguese, Bengali, Hindi, Mandarin, Nepali. The word has effectively the same historical origin and journey.	<i>Chá</i>
Dubida	Not only pronunciation between Nepali and Portuguese is similar, but also the meaning of <i>Doubt</i>	<i>Dúvida</i>
Janela	Same word, same meaning in both Bengali and Portuguese language (<i>window</i>)	<i>Janela</i>
Ma/Mama/Maa	It means mother in Bengali/ Hindi/ Mandarin / Newari / Urdu	<i>Mãe</i> (mother)
Nai /Nei	No is a similar word in many languages, including Hindi, Bengali and Nepali	<i>Não</i>

EXAMPLE OF WORDS THAT HAVE SIMILAR PRONUNCIATION BUT DIFFERENT MEANING (IN LANGUAGE LEARNING, THESE ARE CALLED ‘FALSE FRIENDS’ AS SOMETIMES WE GET CONFUSED ABOUT THE MEANING):

WORD (IN WHAT LANGUAGE)	MEANING IN PORTUGUESE	WRITING IN PORTUGUESE
Constipated (English). It means someone who has difficulty evacuating.	The similarly pronounced word in Portuguese, means someone has a cold	<i>Constipado</i>
Ma	In Portuguese, it means bad, whilst in Chinese language it means Mother.	<i>Má</i>
Mussa (nepali)	Similarly to English, it means Mouse – both the animal and the computer equipment	<i>Rato</i>

WORDS IN COMMON ALSO PROVIDE GREAT CONVERSATION STARTERS WITH PEOPLE WHO SPEAK THE MAJORITY LANGUAGE OF THE COUNTRY. IT STIMULATES CURIOSITY AND MUTUAL LEARNING.

Even in Portuguese, some words have many different meanings. For example, the word *garoto* is used for a type of weaker coffee with milk, but it can also be used to refer to a young boy

WRITE DOWN ANY WORDS YOU LEARN WITH MORE THAN 1 MEANING:

Levels of formality (“*formas de tratamento*”) has a common etiquette in both Portuguese and Nepali.

MAKE A NOTE OF EXPRESSIONS YOU HEAR TO INDICATE FORMAL APPROACH TO ANOTHER PERSON (AND OF HOW YOU WOULD PRONOUNCE THEM):

For Example:

O Senhor
A Senhora Doutora

EASY TIPS

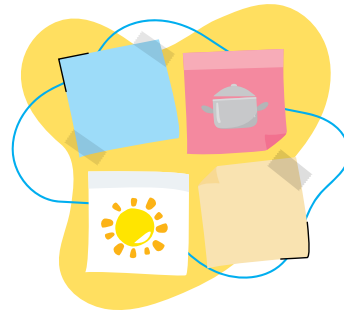
Choose 2 or 3 tips and start to apply and see if it works for you. Some may be more appropriate for your personality and interaction style, others may not be compatible with your lifestyle. Select what suits you best and **make it a habit for a while** to see your language skills improve.

USE STICKY NOTES AT HOME

In your house, put up sticky notes with a word in three languages (your own language, Portuguese, and writing of how you would personally pronounce that word in Portuguese) **next to the object.**

For example, stick a paper on your window with the word sun ("sol") and cloud ("nuvem") and how you pronounce it; stick by your basin a paper with the word water ("água"), tap ("torneira"), towel ("toalha") and their pronunciation; stick near your stove words like pots / pans ("panelas/frigideiras"); etc.

Your brain will start gently picking up on the language reinforcement of those words. Get rid of them once you have learnt how to pronounce those words, and their meaning, to celebrate you have already learnt them.



CARRY A LITTLE NOTEBOOK WITH YOU

Keep a small notebook in your bag or pocket, to write down one word or sentence from advertising posters, signposts, or curious things you see when you are on the street or in the metro. You may try and imagine the context the word/sentence is about, based on the image, logo, or colours featured.

Later, you can research what it actually means, and rejoice if you understood the remit or context...you can be surprised by how good your intuition is!



FREE ADVERTISING LEAFLETS

At the entrance of some blocks of flats, as well as in supermarkets, there are often colourful leaflets with products on special offer/discount.

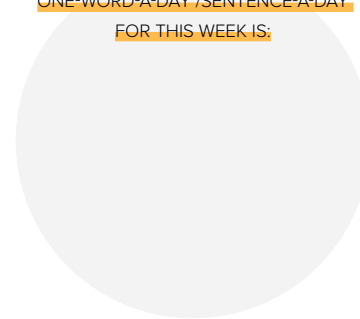
Having an image of the product, with the word describing it right next to it, provides a simple view of products we might use on a regular basis.

LEARN ONE WORD (OR SENTENCE) A DAY

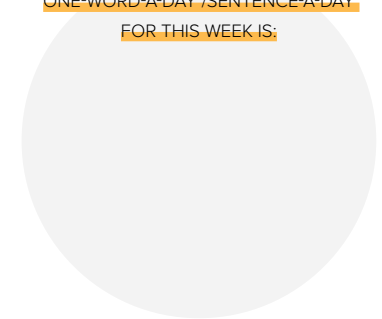
Try and choose 1 word each day, about a topic of your interest, or from a context you regularly go to. For example, if you work in a kitchen, try and learn one word each day of an object, tool or equipment you see repeatedly in that environment. Try to also learn **1 verb per week** – verbs indicate actions, and therefore will help you gain confidence and language tools to start forming sentences.

Hear it, see how you write it, make a note of it on a piece of paper or booklet you can look at again. Write down also **how you would pronounce it in your own language/ symbols/ in a drawing.** Once you feel you can pronounce the word properly and know exactly what it means, tick it off your written list as a celebration. You could also choose your '1 word per day' to be about the same topic during the whole week. And the following week, you only choose words about another topic that is relevant for you or to your life.

MY FAVOURITE
ONE-WORD-A-DAY / SENTENCE-A-DAY
FOR THIS WEEK IS:



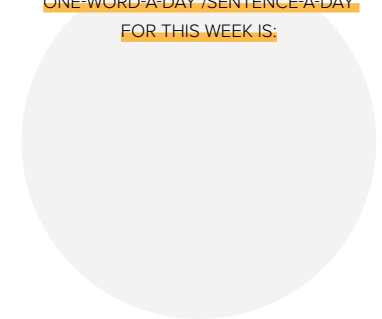
MY FAVOURITE
ONE-WORD-A-DAY / SENTENCE-A-DAY
FOR THIS WEEK IS:



MY FAVOURITE
ONE-WORD-A-DAY / SENTENCE-A-DAY
FOR THIS WEEK IS:



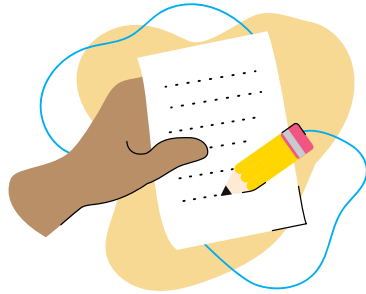
MY FAVOURITE
ONE-WORD-A-DAY / SENTENCE-A-DAY
FOR THIS WEEK IS:



PRACTICAL LISTS

Writing your shopping list is a fantastic opportunity to start writing some of the ingredients also in the language you are learning. It will be a **bilingual list**! Writing it down – in correct writing, or writing it in the way you pronounce the ingredient – is a gentle reminder of the meaning of the word and for recycling the word when we go to the supermarket, and when you later use the ingredient. Therefore, it helps us **learn the meaning** of that word. If you look after children, their school usually requests a list of classroom materials and equipment at the beginning of the school year, to use for their learning activities at school.

Try to read it and draw each material with your child. The school may even be grateful to have a list with drawings to share with other families who don't speak Portuguese yet! You could even practice pronunciation with your child, while supporting their self-sufficiency in knowing what to take to school.



ONE MINUTE OF COURAGE A DAY

By the very fact that you are in a new country and trying to interact within other frameworks and cultural codes, you are already very brave by nature!

Now it's time to consciously put it into practice again, during 2 minutes per day. In a simple everyday context – for example, at the supermarket till, with the bus driver, with the doorman at work – try to phrase a full sentence in Portuguese. And change one word in the sentence each day.

FOR EXAMPLE

“Bom dia! Hoje o dia está...”
(Good morning! Today the weather is...)
and complete differently according to the day: *“bom/chuvoso/primaveril/...”*
(good / rainy / feels like Spring/..)

THE SENTENCE I AM GOING TO TEST THIS WEEK IS...

“Boa tarde! Hoje queria um...”
(Good afternoon! Today I would like a...)
and complete with a different item each day depending on your preference: *“café pingado / chá de menta / meia de leite/...”*
(expresso with milk/mint tea / hot milk and coffee/..)

MY LIST

A large grid of dots for writing a list. The grid is 20 columns wide and 30 rows high. On the right side of the grid, there are three illustrations of vegetables: a red apple at the top, a carrot in the middle, and a purple eggplant at the bottom.

REUSE YOUR NEW WORD OR SENTENCE STRAIGHT AWAY

Engage in every possible opportunity to **reuse the new words** or sentences you have learnt, **on the same day** or **same week**. By reusing them, you are training your brain to retain and understand the new vocabulary.

This also provides repetition of that word until you can actually remember and recognise its sound and meaning.

Maybe you can send someone a text message straight away with that word to put it into practice, or include it in your next conversation (for example, if you have learnt numbers, ask for how many kilos of chicken legs you want at the Butcher's to practice body parts and numbers).

WATCH A TV SERIES, TELENVELA, SOAP OPERA

If you have access to Portuguese TV channels, choose a programme that seems interesting enough for you, and stick to it for at least a few episodes. It may seem hard, but your hearing is tuning into the sounds you are exposed to. That will eventually make it easier for you to distinguish certain sounds.

If it is a repetitive programme (*telenovelas*, for example, are often repetitive dialogues about family or relationships; cookery programmes often repeat the name of a number of ingredients; etc.) try to speak out loud the words

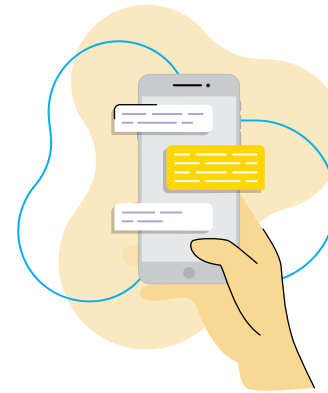
and sentences you start recognising when the TV says them. That way, you are working on your phonetics and pronunciation without anyone listening and without feeling shy. Even if you don't understand the sentence, you are already practicing language production/ speaking.

At a following stage, if you also have **subtitles**, you can start identifying the words you already recognise, to see what they look like in writing. Identifying keywords helps to understand the context.



LANGUAGE EXCHANGES

A Pakistani mother and her child's Portuguese teacher are implementing a regular learning exchange at the time of this publication: she writes WhatsApp messages in Portuguese and the teacher replies in English. Through this practice, they are each writing in a language they are still learning – sparing embarrassment about mistakes, and creating safety to mutually correct each other and to practice language.



Many individuals do a language exchange by having coffee/tea once a week or fortnightly, with the same person for 1 hour maximum, and each one will speak the language they are learning, whilst the other person will advise on how to pronounce more clearly some of the sentences used, or better ways of expressing the same sentence. It's fun and it helps create friendships.



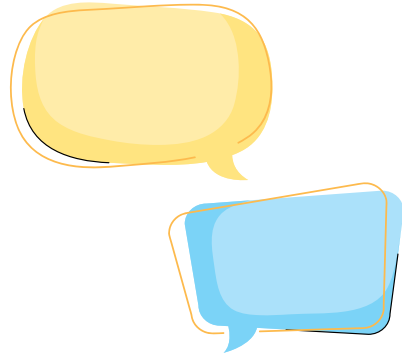
SENTENCES I AM CORRECTING OR LEARNING WITH MY LANGUAGE EXCHANGE PERSON:

DIALOGUE BUILDING

Recognising words we commonly need to use is really important – both in writing and orally through the pronunciation. At the same time, it is also very important to learn some key expressions we may need, by getting the sound of the full sentence. It gives us a sense of achievement to hear ourselves produce a full sentence or local expression we regularly hear other people say.

For instance, children may need to learn fast “*Posso ir à casa de banho, por favor?*” (Can I please go to the toilet?) so they can ask their teacher at school; adults may need full sentences for immediate needs, such as “*preciso de ver um médico pois não me*

sinto bem” (I need to see a doctor because I am not feeling well) or “*onde posso carregar o passe?*” (where do I recharge my public transport card?) or “*preciso de ajuda, por favor*” (I need help please).



YOU CAN TEACH YOURSELF THE DIALOGUE BUILDING TECHNIQUE

1. Identify 2 sentences you regularly need to say or that may be relevant for your daily life.
2. If you have a Portuguese speaking neighbour or acquaintance, listen to how he/she pronounces that sentence.
3. Write down or voice record, if possible, how it sounds.
4. Practice saying it by yourself a few times, and record yourself saying it, to assess if you are saying it the same way as a Portuguese person would pronounce it.
5. Now go out and try to say the sentence out loud with two Portuguese speaking persons to test if they understand it. Ask them to say it back, for you to repeat it and correct your pronunciation if necessary.
6. Reinforce by repeating the sentence the way you have perfected it, until you feel fully confident with it.
7. You are now more than ready to start the same process with a new sentence. Concentrate just on 1 sentence each week, to consolidate your language learning.

SENTENCES I WANT TO USE TO TEST DIALOGUE BUILDING TECHNIQUE

A large grid of dotted lines for writing sentences, followed by four horizontal lines for additional notes.

MY OWN NOTES

Grid area for taking notes.

IMPORTANT WORDS THAT
I LEARNED ABOUT _____ :

REMEMBER :

IMPORTANT WORDS THAT
I LEARNED ABOUT _____ :

Grid area for taking notes.

COMMON SENTENCES

By listening to your learnings, guided by immediate daily needs, a number of common sentences have been collected. They can be adapted to various contexts. You can use this section to note down the most useful frequent words and sentences below; as in previous sections, it is advisable to write them exactly how you would pronounce them as this will make it easier for you to retain the new words and sentences.

SOCIAL WELFARE / FINANCE DEPARTMENT

KEY WORDS:

- *Número Segurança Social*
- *Marcação*

MAKE A NOTE OF HOW TO PRONOUNCE, IN YOUR LANGUAGE, THE WORD/SENTENCE YOU MOST NEED:

- *Preciso de marcação para...* (I need an appointment for..)
- *Preciso de Mudar a Morada...* (I need to change my address)
- *Que papel preciso para...?* (What document do I need to bring for...?)
- *Pode-me dizer onde...?* (can you please tell me where...)

AT THE CAFÉ

KEY WORDS:

- *Café (expresso)*
- *Café pingado*
- *Abatanado*
- *Garoto*
- *Meia de Leite*
- *Sem princípio* ("water after the main coffee is out")
- *Galão* ("it looks bigger and darker as if it has more coffee..")

- *Arranje-me um.....por favor* (Please give me a)
- *Quero um se faz favor* (I would like aplease)
- *Posso usar a casa de banho?* (Can I use the toilet?)

HOSPITAL

KEY WORDS:

- *Marcação*
- *Médico*
- *Saúde*
- *Centro de Saúde*

MAKE A NOTE OF HOW TO PRONOUNCE, IN YOUR LANGUAGE, THE WORD/SENTENCE YOU MOST NEED:

- *Preciso de uma consulta de...* (I need an appointment for..)
- *Preciso de ir às urgências para...* (I need to go to Emergency because of..)
- *Preciso de marcar para...* (I need to book a..)
- *Preciso de ajuda por favor* (I need help please)
- *Que cuidados preciso?* (What care should I take?)

JOB INTERVIEW

KEY WORDS:

- *Trabalho*
- *Candidatura*
- *Curso*
- *Competências*

MAKE A NOTE OF HOW TO PRONOUNCE, IN YOUR LANGUAGE, THE WORD/SENTENCE YOU MOST NEED:

- *Quero candidatar-me para...* (I want to apply for..)
- *Tenho experiência em....* (I have previous experience in..)
- *Tenho curso em...* (I have studied...(subject))
- *Aprendi muito sobre...* (I learnt a lot about..)



LOCAL CULTURE

SING ALONG

Radio is great company and a fantastic way to know what the general population is listening to and concerned about. It is hard of course to understand what is being said on spoken radio programs and radio news when we do not understand the language. However, national commercial radio stations tend to play whatever **music** is in vogue in the country at the moment. **Choose a song you like** the sound of (or rhythm), and try to **imitate its sounds**. Your hearing will thus be tuning into the phonetics and sounds of the language you are listening to. The wording as you are singing along, even if incorrect, will train your speaking to the sounds produced in the language you are learning. After all, this is how children learn to speak! You can also search for the lyrics of the song,



through its title or singer, to read the key words it mentions. Again, it is not important that you understand every single word, but rather that you understand, more or less, what sentences are being sung and its general meaning. **A great way to work on repetition and practice sentence building** by yourself (or with people at home!), spreading joy through singing and building confidence.

NURSERY RHYMES

Having children in the house may provide an excuse to listen to nursery rhymes in our own language and from your own childhood, as well as to start listening to songs for babies in Portuguese language. Many websites feature nursery rhymes, some of which also contain the lyrics which helps to see the words and sentences that are being sung. For example, <https://www.maemequer.pt/desenvolvimento-infantil/crescer/brincar/cancoes-de-embalar/> contains a few popular nursery rhymes (“*canções de embalar*”).

Other examples of common nursery rhymes in Portugal are “*Doidas andam as galinhas*” (Chickens going crazy...) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IAxFXZdghSs> and “*Todos os patinhos sabem bem nadar*”, about ducklings learning to swim <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S9fOBU1qDG0>



CELEBRATION DAYS

Through a local calendar, you'll be able to access basic information about festivities in Portugal – which many people generically refer to as “*feriados*” (days of holiday). By googling the date or specific name of the *feriado*, you can find out about the origin of the festivity (religious/Catholic, Government, historical, etc.) and its meaning. Asking people around (the local shop, supermarket till, people at the café in your neighbourhood) you will get a variety of explanations about how the day is celebrated in different parts of the country or amongst families with diverse lifestyles.

It could even provide you with an excuse to **share one of your important dates**, its significance to you, and how you celebrate within your community/ family / people you join with for the festivity!



EXAMPLES OF SOME OF THE FESTIVITIES CELEBRATED IN PORTUGAL:

ANO NOVO

Widely celebrated in Western Europe on the night leading up to 1st January

New Year by Gregorian calendar

IMPLANTAÇÃO DA REPÚBLICA PORTUGUESA

5th October

Since 1910, this date is known for the end of Constitutional Monarchy and the start of a republican regime in Portugal.

PÁSCOA (EASTER)

Usually between end of March and end of April

Refers to the religious belief of Jesus being reborn, and his resurrection is the reason behind this celebration. Christians celebrate this day on a Sunday, 40 days after a period of fasting or penance. Orthodox and Jewish Easter day often differ from the Catholic celebration.

**CELEBRATIONS FROM YOUR CULTURAL HERITAGE
YOU MAY WISH TO SHARE THE MEANING OF:**

REMEMBER :

**CONVERSATION
STARTERS**

In conversation with various people who were not brought up in Portugal, many expressed curiosity in getting to know how to entertain a conversation with the Portuguese. Starters like “*Bom dia, tudo bem?*” have had no reply, often leaving you a bit displaced when not getting an answer or a reaction of starting a conversation.

However, “*tudo bem*” in Portuguese language is often used as a rhetorical question - that is, one that does not require an answer.

It is hard to define what would help to start a two-way conversation or opportunities for continuity. Individuals are all different, and despite the Portuguese being a good-natured people, some people may generally not be used to chatting with a new person, or may be shy or mistrusting especially when living in bigger cities.



**BELOW ARE SOME EXAMPLES OBSERVED
AS CONVERSATION STARTERS YOU MAY WISH TO TRY.**

As waiting for the bus, we often cross paths with other people who are just... waiting. It is a place of opportunity for a new conversation (and language practice!) especially with older people who are often eager to chat to someone.

In random encounters, one of the triggers that gets people interacting seems to be daily trivia. The weather is a classic trigger: people often like to comment about feeling cold or hot, about the rain that has been going on too long, or rejoice about the good weather.

If you are new to a neighbourhood, look for your local fruit shop, greengrocers, café, minimarket. If you are spoilt for choice, ask someone in your building or street what is the best place locally to buy fruit, for example. Longstanding residents are usually very proud to indicate their favourite, and to share the reasons why.



SURPRISE US!

Share your joy in learning, and in teaching others
what you have already learnt.
Post a photo of your sticky note or practical list!

AS MINHAS NOTAS

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