

English Vocabulary: 'Only' vs 'Unique'

The words 'only' and 'unique' can both translate to 'único(a)' in Portuguese, but the word 'only' can also translate to 'apenas' or 'somente', depending on the context. Here are the common uses:

1) only (adjective/adverb/conjunction)

a) Adjective – alone in a category.

- I am an **only** child. (PT: *filho único*)
- This is my **only** white shirt. (PT: *única camisa branca*)
- The **only** way to go is by plane. (PT: *única maneira*)

b) Adverb – limited quantity.

- A: What colours are available? B: We have **only** white and blue shirts. (PT: *apenas*)
- A: How many apples are there? B: There are **only** two apples left. (PT: *apenas*)
- A: How many people participated in the meeting? B: **Only** three. (PT: *apenas*)

c) Adverb – not important.

- Hello - it's **only** me! (PT: *somente*)
- A: Look out – here comes the teacher! B: You're wrong, it's **only** the cleaner. (PT: *somente*)

d) Conjunction – with a condition.

- I will go **only** if you go too. (PT: *somente*)
- I'll do it **only** if you buy an ice-cream for me later. (PT: *somente*)

2) **unique (adjective)**. This means that nothing/nobody is the same/equal.

- John is a **unique** child – he can speak 25 languages! (PT: *criança única*)
- Dubai is a **unique** city – it's so different from all other cities. (PT: *cidade única*)
- Chess is a **unique** game – there is nothing similar. (PT: *jogo único*)

Some mixed examples:

- Every customer has only one ID number. Each ID number is unique.
- I only feel safe in my house. It is a unique place.
- The word 'queueing' is unique, as it's the only English word with 5 consecutive vowels.

Tip: The word 'unique' is not common in day-to-day conversation. So, if you are not sure, it is recommended to always use the word 'only'.

Exercise. Complete with 'only' or 'unique':

1. She is the _____ person who I can trust.
2. I think that Einstein was a _____ person. He was incredible!
3. The Eiffel Tower is not _____, because there is a similar tower in Blackpool, UK.
4. A: I would like a Coca-Cola, please. B: I'm sorry, we _____ have Pepsi.
6. The dog goes out _____ if I go out too!