

THE SPEAK CLEARLY METHOD

FREE PRONUNCIATION GUIDE

English Pronunciation

for European Portuguese Speakers

para falantes de português europeu · built around your first language

/θ/ TH

final -s

the R

dark L

vowels

-ED

You don't have to lose your accent.

You have to be understood.

by Evangeline Smith & Miriam Smith · authors of Speak Clearly

THE PRACTICAL ENGLISH SERIES

English Pronunciation for European Portuguese Speakers

A Speak Clearly Method guide

Evangeline Smith & Miriam Smith

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Companion to "Speak Clearly: A Practical Guide to English Pronunciation."

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Built for European Portuguese speakers

Your accent isn't random — it's European Portuguese, a precise and richly textured language, showing through in English. Because it follows clear rules, the places it shapes your English are predictable. And predictable means fixable.

This guide skips the sounds you already handle well and goes straight to the handful that most affect whether English listeners understand you the first time.

The promise

This is not about erasing your accent or sounding American. Only about 1 in 4 English speakers learned it as a first language — you're the majority, not the exception. We keep your accent and fix only what gets in the way of being understood.

How to use it

Read the strengths on the next page first, then work through the fix cards one at a time. Say everything OUT LOUD — into your phone's recorder or a mirror. A sound only counts when it survives outside the page.

Sounds you already own

European Portuguese gives you an unusual head start: your ear is trained on a wide range of vowels, and you already reduce unstressed syllables — which is exactly how English rhythm works.

ch → SH

Your ch in *chave*, *chuva* is exactly English “sh” in *she*, *wash*, *nation*.

j / g → measure

Your j in *janela*, *hoje* is the tricky /ʒ/ in *measure*, *vision*, *usually*.

lh → ‘lli’

Your lh in *filho*, *trabalho* is close to the sound in *million*, *billion*.

Vowel reduction

You already weaken unstressed vowels — English stress-timed rhythm feels natural to you.

A wide vowel range

European Portuguese has many vowel qualities — your ear hears fine differences most learners miss.

Start from these. When a new English sound feels hard, remember how many you already make perfectly.

Fix cards · 1 of 3

TH

/θ ð/

The TH sound

EUROPEAN HABIT Portuguese has no TH, so “think” becomes “tink/sink” and “this” becomes “dis/zis.”

THE FIX Put your tongue tip between your teeth and push air. In a mirror you should see it peek out.

think

three

this

mother

-S

/s z/

Final S, not ‘sh’

EUROPEAN HABIT European Portuguese says final s as ‘sh’, so “books” becomes “booksh” and “is” becomes “ish.”

THE FIX Keep the tongue further forward and flat: a thin hiss (/s/) or a buzz (/z/) — never ‘sh’.

books

is

was

cars

R

/r/

The English R

EUROPEAN HABIT The European Portuguese r is made in the throat (carro). English r is made with the tongue.

THE FIX Curl your tongue up and back and let it FLOAT — no throat scraping, lips slightly rounded.

red

right

car

around

Fix cards · 2 of 3

L

dark L

Lighten the L

EUROPEAN HABIT European Portuguese L is dark in every position, so “light” and “love” sound heavy and swallowed.

THE FIX Before a vowel, keep L light and forward: tongue tip touches behind the teeth, body of tongue low.

light

love

little

believe

ə

reduction

Don't reduce too far

EUROPEAN HABIT European Portuguese deletes unstressed vowels, so English syllables disappear: “potato” → “p'tato.”

THE FIX English weakens unstressed vowels to a soft ‘uh’ — but you must still HEAR the syllable. Keep it, just quiet.

potato

camera

suppose

ɪ

/ɪ i:/

Ship vs Sheep

EUROPEAN HABIT Short “ship” and long “sheep” can blur into one Portuguese ‘i’.

THE FIX Short /ɪ/: relaxed and quick. Long /i:/: spread your lips like a smile and hold it longer.

ship/sheep

live/leave

fill/feel

Fix cards · 3 of 3

-ED

/t d ɪd/

The -ED ending

EUROPEAN HABIT -ED is often dropped or given an extra syllable, so “walked” loses its ending.

THE FIX Three sounds only: /t/ after air (kissed), /d/ after a buzz (loved), /ɪd/ after t or d (wanted).

kissed

loved

wanted

nasal

vowels

Don't nasalise

EUROPEAN HABIT Portuguese nasal vowels (ão, em) colour English words, giving “don't” and “think” a nasal tone.

THE FIX Keep English vowels oral — the air leaves your mouth, not your nose. Only n, m and ng are nasal.

don't

think

want

H

/h/

The H sound

EUROPEAN HABIT Portuguese h is silent, so “house” becomes “ouse” and “happy” becomes “appy.”

THE FIX Push a gentle breath before the vowel — like fogging a mirror. Feel the air leave.

house

happy

hello

behind

PRACTISE

Your 7-day plan

Ten minutes a day. Record yourself on day 1 and day 7 — hearing your own progress is the most motivating thing you'll do.

DAY
1

TH

Tongue between teeth: think, three, this. Record 3 sentences — keep them.

DAY
2

Final S

Thin hiss, not 'sh': books, is, was, cars.

DAY
3

The R

Tongue, not throat — float it: red, right, around.

DAY
4

Light L

Keep L forward and light: light, love, little.

DAY
5

Syllables

Quiet but audible: potato, camera, suppose — don't delete the vowel.

DAY
6

-ED & vowels

kissed /t/, loved /d/, wanted /ɪd/; ship vs sheep in the mirror.

DAY
7

Together

Re-record your day-1 sentences. Compare. Pick your hardest sound to keep polishing.

WHEN YOU'VE GOT THESE

Ready for all 22 sounds?

This guide covers the sounds European Portuguese speakers most need. *Speak Clearly* — the full book — covers all 22 sounds and speech patterns, with minimal pairs and tongue twisters for every one, guides for six first languages, and a complete 30-day plan.

Speak Clearly

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**Speak clearly.
Speak as yourself.**

Fala como tu és.

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