

THE SPEAK CLEARLY METHOD

FREE PRONUNCIATION GUIDE

English Pronunciation for German Speakers

für Deutschsprachige · built around your first language

W vs V

endings

/θ/ TH

S vs Z

st- sp-

the R

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 German Speakers

A Speak Clearly Method guide

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First edition · 2026

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

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Built for German speakers

Your accent isn't random — it's German, a clear and structured language, showing through in English. Because German follows consistent 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

German gives you one of the strongest head starts of any language — including something most learners lack: you already hear long and short vowels.

Vowel length

German distinguishes long and short vowels — so “ship vs sheep” is far easier for you.

sch → SH

Your sch in Schule, Tisch is exactly English “sh” in she, wash.

h → H

You pronounce h clearly — “house” and “happy” start easily for you.

Consonant clusters

German handles Herbst and Angst — English ‘strengths, texts’ hold no fear.

f and most consonants

p, t, k, m, n, l, f, sh — all already clear and correct.

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

Fix cards · 1 of 3

W V

/w v/

W vs V**GERMAN HABIT**

German w is /v/ and v is /f/, so “west” becomes “vest” and “very” becomes “fery.”

THE FIX

For W, round your lips like a kiss — no teeth. For V, top teeth on bottom lip WITH voice.

west/vest

very/ferry

wine/vine

-d -g

voicing

Keep the ending voiced**GERMAN HABIT**

German devoices final consonants (Tag → ‘Tak’), so “dog” becomes “dok” and “bad” becomes “bat.”

THE FIX

Keep your voice buzzing right to the end. Hand on throat: “dog” must still buzz on the g.

dog

bad

his

prize

TH

/θ ð/

The TH sound**GERMAN HABIT**

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

THE FIX

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

think

three

this

mother

Fix cards · 2 of 3

S Z

/s z/

S vs Z at the start

GERMAN HABIT German initial s is /z/, so “sun” becomes “zun” and “see” becomes “zee.”

THE FIX English initial s is just air — no buzz. Hand on throat: “sun” should stay silent in the throat.

sun/zone

see/zee

sink/zinc

st sp

clusters

Not ‘sht-’ or ‘shp-’

GERMAN HABIT German st/sp become ‘sht/shp’ (Stadt, Sport), so “street” becomes “shtreet,” “sport”→“shport.”

THE FIX In English, keep it a plain hissing s: sss-treet, sss-port. No ‘sh’ at all.

street

sport

stop

speak

R

/r/

The English R

GERMAN HABIT The German r is made in the throat. The English r is a floating tongue tip — completely different.

THE FIX Curl your tongue up and back, touching nothing, and round your lips. No throat scrape.

red

right

car

around

Fix cards · 3 of 3

æ e

/æ/

Cat vs bet

GERMAN HABIT

German has 'ä' but not quite English /æ/, so "cat" can come out as "ket."

THE FIX

For /æ/, open your mouth wider and smile — more open than the German ä.

cat/bet

bad/bed

man/men

j y

/j/

J vs Y

GERMAN HABIT

German j is English 'y', so "job" can become "yob" and "juice" becomes "yuice."

THE FIX

English j = d+z (as in Dschungel). Start with the tongue touching, then release into the buzz.

job

juice

jump

yes

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

W vs V

Round lips for W, teeth+voice for V. Drill west/vest, very/ferry. Record 3 sentences.

DAY
2

Endings

Keep the voice on: dog, bad, his, prize. Hand on throat.

DAY
3

TH

Tongue between teeth: think, three, this. In the mirror.

DAY
4

S vs Z

Plain hiss at the start: sun, see, sink — no buzz.

DAY
5

st- sp-

No 'sh': street, sport, stop, speak. Say each 10x.

DAY
6

R & J

Float the r; j = d+3 (job, juice).

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 German 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.**

Sprich, wie du bist.

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