

THE SPEAK CLEARLY METHOD

FREE PRONUNCIATION GUIDE

English Pronunciation for Mandarin Speakers

Nǐ hǎo · built around your first language

endings

R vs L

/θ/ TH

-ED -S

clusters

voicing

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 Mandarin Speakers

A Speak Clearly Method guide

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Companion to “Speak Clearly: A Practical Guide to English Pronunciation.”

@SpeakClearlyMethod · linktr.ee/SpeakClearlyMethod

Built for Mandarin speakers

Your accent isn't random — it's Mandarin, a beautifully structured language, showing through in English. Because Mandarin 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

Mandarin gives you real advantages — including one most learners never develop: a finely tuned ear for pitch.

Tonal ear

Years of tones give you excellent pitch control — a gift for English stress and intonation.

sh / x → SH

Your sh in shan gives you English “sh” in she, wash, nation.

w → W

Your w in wo gives you English ‘w’ — “west” and “wine” are easy for you.

y → Y

Your y in yao gives you English ‘y’ in yes, you, year.

ch → CH

Your ch in cha is close to English “ch” in cheese, watch.

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

Fix cards · 1 of 3

-C

endings

Say the final consonant

MANDARIN HABIT Mandarin syllables end in a vowel, n or ng — so English endings drop off: “book”→“boo,” “help”→“he.”

THE FIX Finish the word. Say the final consonant crisply and stop — don’t let it fade away.

book

help

first

cats

r l

/r l/

R vs L

MANDARIN HABIT R and L blur together, so “right” and “light” sound the same.

THE FIX For L, press your tongue tip behind your top teeth. For R, curl back and touch NOTHING.

right/light

road/load

rice/lice

TH

/θ ð/

The TH sound

MANDARIN HABIT Mandarin has no TH, so “think” becomes “sink” 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

-ED -S

endings

Grammar you can hear

MANDARIN HABIT Dropped endings remove meaning: “walked”→“walk,” “books”→“book” — listeners lose the tense and plural.

THE FIX Say the ending: walkED, bookS, askED. In English these small sounds carry the grammar.

walked

books

asked

dogs

b d g

voicing

Voiced vs voiceless

MANDARIN HABIT Mandarin separates sounds by breath, not voice — so “bad” can sound like “pat,” “dog” like “tok.”

THE FIX Hand on throat: b, d, g must BUZZ. p, t, k are just air. Feel the difference.

bad/pat

dog/tok

good

CC

clusters

Don't add a vowel

MANDARIN HABIT Mandarin has no clusters, so a vowel sneaks in: “street”→“se-treet,” “blue”→“be-lue.”

THE FIX Glide the consonants straight together with no vowel between them.

street

blue

spring

next

Fix cards · 3 of 3

i:

/ɪ i:/

Ship vs Sheep

MANDARIN HABIT Mandarin doesn't use vowel length this way, so short "ship" and long "sheep" merge.

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

V W

/v/

The V sound

MANDARIN HABIT Mandarin has no /v/, so "very" becomes "wery" and "van" becomes "wan."

THE FIX For V, rest your top teeth on your bottom lip and buzz. For W, lips only — no teeth.

very/wery

van/wan

vine/wine

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

Endings

Finish the word: book, help, first, cats. Record 3 sentences — keep them.

DAY
2

R vs L

Tongue touches for L, floats for R. Drill right/light, road/load.

DAY
3

TH

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

DAY
4

-ED and -S

Say the grammar: walked, books, asked, dogs.

DAY
5

Voicing

Hand on throat: b/d/g must buzz. bad not pat, dog not tock.

DAY
6

Clusters & V

No extra vowel (street, blue); teeth-on-lip for V (very, van).

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 Mandarin 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

A Practical Guide to English Pronunciation

All 22 sounds, first-language guides, self-assessment and a 30-day plan.

Buy on Amazon → amazon.com/dp/B0H7NHTLKV

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Speak as yourself.**

Speak as you are.

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