

THE SPEAK CLEARLY METHOD

FREE PRONUNCIATION GUIDE

English Pronunciation for Russian Speakers

для русскоговорящих · built around your first language

/θ/ TH

W vs V

endings

the H

vowels

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 Russian Speakers

A Speak Clearly Method guide

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

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Built for Russian speakers

Your accent isn't random — it's Russian, a rich and powerful language, showing through in English. Because Russian 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

Russian gives you a real head start — a big, strong sound system. Several English sounds that defeat other learners are already close to ones you use every day. Trust them.

ш → SH

Your ш in шапка is very close to English “sh” in she, wash, nation.

ч → CH

Your ч in чай, час is very close to English “ch” in cheese, watch.

ж → ‘s’ in measure

Your ж in журнал is very close to the /ʒ/ in measure, vision, usually.

з → Z

Your з in зебра is exactly English “z” — “zoo” and “buzz” are easy for you.

Clusters

Russian loves consonant clusters (встреча!), so English clusters don’t scare you at all.

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**RUSSIAN HABIT**

Russian has no TH, so “think” becomes “sink” and “this” becomes “zis” or “dis.”

THE FIX

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

think

three

this

mother

W V

/w v/

W vs V**RUSSIAN HABIT**

Russian has в /v/ but no /w/, so “west” becomes “vest” and “wine” becomes “vine.”

THE FIX

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

west/vest

wine/vine

we/V

-d -z

voicing

Keep endings voiced**RUSSIAN HABIT**

Russian devoices final letters (д→т, г→к, з→с, в→ф), so “bad”→“bat,” “his”→“hiss,” “have”→“haff.”

THE FIX

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

bad

dog

his

have

Fix cards · 2 of 3

H

/h/

The H sound

RUSSIAN HABIT

Russian x is harsh and raspy, so “hello” can come out as a hard “khello,” “house” as “khouse.”

THE FIX

English h is soft — just a gentle breath before the vowel, like fogging a mirror. No scrape in the throat.

house

happy

hello

behind

iɪ

/ɪ i:/

Ship vs Sheep

RUSSIAN HABIT

English keeps short and long versions of vowels Russian keeps single, so “ship” and “sheep” blur.

THE FIX

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

ship/sheep

live/leave

fill/feel

æ

/æ/

The ‘cat’ vowel

RUSSIAN HABIT

Russian has no /æ/, so “cat” becomes “ket” or “kat” and “bad” becomes “bed.”

THE FIX

Open your mouth wider and smile — /æ/ is brighter and more open than any Russian vowel.

cat

bad

man

apple

Fix cards · 3 of 3

R

/r/

The English R

RUSSIAN HABIT

The Russian p is strongly rolled. The English r touches nothing — a rolled r sounds very foreign.

THE FIX

Curl your tongue up and back and let it FLOAT — no contact, no roll. Round your lips slightly.

red

right

car

around

NG

/ŋ/

The NG sound

RUSSIAN HABIT

Russian has no /ŋ/, so “sing” can lose its ending or gain a hard g: “sing-g.”

THE FIX

Let the sound flow through your nose and stop — no g at the end. Pinch your nose: “sing” should stop.

sing

singer

running

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

Keep the voice on: bad, dog, his, have. Hand on throat — feel the buzz to the end. Record 3 sentences — keep them.

DAY
2

TH

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

DAY
3

W vs V

Round lips for W, teeth for V: west/vest, wine/vine.

DAY
4

The H

Soft breath, no scrape: house, happy, hello.

DAY
5

Vowels

ship/sheep, and the bright /æ/ in cat, bad, man.

DAY
6

R & NG

Float the r (red, right); nose test for ng (sing, not sing-g).

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 Russian 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

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**Speak clearly.
Speak as yourself.**

Говори по-своему.

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