Speak English Now Podcast 🎧

Episode #357

State Name Series (Midwest)

Hi! I'm Georgiana, and I'm back with a new episode of the Speak English Now podcast—the podcast that helps you speak English fluently, with no grammar and no textbooks.

This is the third episode of our state names series. This time, we're traveling to the **Midwest**.

Let's quickly list all the states in the **Midwest**:
They are: Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota, and Wisconsin.

That's twelve states in total! I'll just focus on a few of the most representative ones: **Michigan, Ohio, Illinois, Wisconsin,** and **Minnesota**.

Here, many names come from Native American languages, rivers, and the land itself.

So, let's discover the hidden stories of the Midwest!

The Midwest is famous for friendly people, farms, big lakes, and very cold winters. (So yes, bring your warmest coat for this trip! 🧥 ❄️
But as always, we're here for the names — and the Midwest has some really interesting ones.

🌊 Michigan

Let's start with Michigan.

The name comes from a Native American word (Ojibwe): *Mishigami*, which means "great water" or "large lake."

And it makes sense, right? Michigan is surrounded by the Great Lakes.

Love water? Then Michigan is perfect — except in winter, when everything freezes!

🏞️ Ohio

Next stop: Ohio.

This name comes from another Native American language, the Seneca. It means "good river."
The Ohio River was very important in the past — for travel, fishing, and trade.
That's why they called it the "good river."

Today, Ohio is known for cities like Cleveland and Columbus, and also for the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame.
Yes, music again!

🌽 Illinois

Now let's go to Illinois.

The name comes from a French version of a Native American word. It means "the people" or "tribe of superior men."
The French explorers changed the spelling and pronunciation.

So now we have Illinois — with a silent "s."
Don't say Illinoissss. It's Illi-noy.
Can you try it? Illi-noy.

Americans will notice immediately if you say the "s." So here's a little pronunciation secret for you!

🌲 Wisconsin

Okay, Wisconsin.

This name also comes from a Native American language. It probably means "river running through a red place." French explorers wrote it down, and the spelling changed over time.

Today, Wisconsin is famous for cheese. Yes, cheese! 🧀 Rivers, red land… and cheese. Lots and lots of cheese.

❄️ Minnesota

And finally, Minnesota.

The name comes from the Dakota Sioux language. It means "sky-tinted water" or "cloudy water." Beautiful, right? It makes you imagine lakes with reflections of the sky.

And that's perfect, because Minnesota is called "The Land of 10,000 Lakes." Honestly, I think they stopped counting at 10,000 — there are even more.

In winter, those lakes freeze, and people even drive cars on the ice. Crazy but true!

✨ Wrap-up

So, what did we learn today in the Midwest?

Michigan: means "great water," Great Lakes.

Ohio: means "good river."

Illinois: means "the people," "tribe of superior men." silent "s."

Wisconsin: means "river through a red place," and today, cheese.

Minnesota: means "sky-tinted water," and "The Land of 10,000 Lakes."

The Midwest shows us how Native American languages shaped the US map. Almost every state name here comes

from those languages — and now you know what they mean.

Now, let's practice with a **point of view story.**

If you want to practice more, get my
Premium Courses:

Point of View-Story
(Learn Grammar)

Now, let's practice with a **Point of View Story**.
I will tell you the same story, but in different points of view. This will help you practice grammar in a natural way.

Next winter, I will take a trip to the Midwest of the United States.

My first stop will be Michigan. I'll imagine beautiful lakes. But they'll be frozen solid, and instead of swimming, I'll slip on the ice.
"Great water?" I'll mutter. "More like great skating rink."

Then, I will go to Ohio. I'll want to see the "good river." But it will be brown and muddy after a storm. I'll laugh and say: "Good river? Maybe not today."

Next, I'll visit Illinois. I'll carefully practice: "Illinoisss…" But people will correct me right away: "It's Illi-noy! The 's' is silent!" I'll think: "Why are silent letters everywhere?"

Get more lessons at: SpeakEnglishPodcast.com

After that, I'll arrive in Wisconsin. I'll expect rivers and forests. But the first thing I'll see is cheese — cheese shops, cheese hats, cheese everywhere. I'll shake my head: "Forget the rivers. This is definitely Cheese-consin."

Finally, I'll reach Minnesota. I'll imagine 10,000 beautiful lakes. But of course, it will be winter, and the lakes will be frozen. People will drive cars on the ice. I'll gasp: "Are these lakes or parking lots?"

When I return home, my friends will ask:
"So, how was your trip to the Midwest?"

I'll smile and say:
"Well, Michigan will freeze me, Ohio will disappoint me, Illinois will embarrass me, Wisconsin will feed me, and Minnesota will shock me.
But hey… at least I'll never forget the state names!"

Past Tense (First Person Plural)

Last winter, we took a trip to the Midwest of the United States.

Our first stop was Michigan. We imagined beautiful lakes. But they were frozen solid. Instead of swimming, we slipped on the ice.
"Great water?" we muttered. "More like great skating rink."

Then, we went to Ohio. We wanted to see the "good river." But it was brown and muddy after a storm. We laughed and said: "Good river? Maybe not today!"

Next, we visited Illinois. We carefully practiced: "Illinoisss…"
But people corrected us: "It's Illi-noy! The 's' is silent!" We d thought: "Why are silent letters everywhere?"

After that, we drove to Wisconsin. We expected rivers and forests. But the first thing we saw was cheese — cheese shops, cheese hats, cheese everywhere. We shook our heads: "Forget the rivers. This should be named Cheese-consin."

Finally, we reached Minnesota. We imagined 10,000 beautiful lakes. But it was winter, and the lakes were frozen. People drove cars on the ice. We gasped: "Are these lakes or parking lots?"

When we returned home, our friends asked:
"So, how was your trip to the Midwest?"

We smiled and said:
"Well, Michigan froze us, Ohio disappointed us, Illinois embarrassed us, Wisconsin fed us, and Minnesota shocked us. But hey... we'll never forget the state names!"

If you want to practice more, get my
Premium Courses:
SpeakEnglishPodcast.com/courses

Georgiana

founder of SpeakEnglishPodcast.com