

Speak English Now Podcast

Episode #358

State Name Series (West and SouthWest)

Welcome back, travelers! One last time, pack your bags — we're heading west.

This is the final episode of our state names series. 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.

Today, we'll visit the **Southwest** and the West.

In the **Southwest**, we have: **Arizona, New Mexico, Oklahoma, and Texas.**

And in the **West**, we have: **Alaska, California, Colorado, Hawaii, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, Oregon, Utah, Washington, and Wyoming.**


That's fifteen states in total! Today, we'll take a closer look at **Texas, Arizona, Colorado, California, Oregon, and Washington.**

You'll hear Spanish words, Native American roots, and even stories of gold and mountains.

Let's enjoy our last adventure together — the West is calling!

So far, we've traveled through the Southeast, the Northeast, and the Midwest.

Today, we're heading west — to the Southwest and the West.

This area is full of deserts, mountains, gold rush history, Hollywood, and lot of sunshine. 

And of course, the state names here are just as fascinating.

Texas

Let's start with Texas.

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The name comes from the Caddo language. It means “friends” or “allies.”

So Texas is basically the “Friendship State.” That’s why the official slogan is “Friendship.”

When Texans say, “Howdy, partner!” — they really mean it.



Arizona

Now, Arizona.

This name probably comes from Spanish words that mean “arid zone” — a dry place.

If you’ve ever seen pictures of Arizona, with deserts and the Grand Canyon, you know it fits perfectly.

Arid means very dry. That’s why Arizona = dry land.

But at the same time, it has some of the most breathtaking landscapes in the world.



Colorado

Next stop: Colorado.

In Spanish, *colorado* can mean “red” or “reddish” (sometimes “flushed”). The state was named after the reddish-colored river in the region.

So when you think of Colorado, imagine mountains, snow... and a touch of red earth.



California

Now let’s talk about California.

This one has a fun story. The name comes from a Spanish novel written in the 1500s.

In the book, California was a mythical island full of gold and ruled by Amazon women.

When explorers reached the west coast, they thought it looked like the place from the story — so they called it California.

So yes... California was named after a fantasy story! And today it's still full of dreams — Hollywood, beaches, and Silicon Valley.

Oregon

Okay, Oregon.

No one is 100% sure where this name comes from. Some say French, others say Native American languages.

But today, Oregon is famous for forests, rivers, and a lot of rain. If you like coffee shops and nature, Oregon is the place.

Washington

And finally, Washington.

This state is named after George Washington, the first president of the United States.

So if you've heard of Washington, D.C., don't get confused. That's the capital city, on the East Coast.

Washington State is on the West Coast — full of mountains, forests, and the city of Seattle.

Wrap-up

Today we learned...

- Texas: from the Caddo word for “friends.”
- Arizona: from Spanish, “arid zone.”
- Colorado: Spanish for “red,” It was named after the reddish-colored river in the region.
- California: named after a mythical place in a Spanish novel.
- Oregon: origin unclear, but full of forests and rain.
- Washington: named after the first U.S. president.

The West and Southwest mix Native American words, Spanish explorers, and American history.

It's the perfect ending for our trip.

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Thank you for traveling with me!
And let me know which state name story was your favorite?
Now, let's practice with a **point of view story**.

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Point of View-Story

(Learn Grammar)

I will tell you the same story, but in different points of view.
This will help you practice grammar in a natural way.

POV Story – Version 1 (Third Person Past)

Last summer, Emma decided to travel through the West and Southwest of the United States.

Her first stop was Texas. She expected friendship, because the name comes from the Caddo word for “friends.” And yes, people greeted her warmly. But they also served her the biggest steak she had ever seen.

Emma whispered: “Thanks, Texas... but I’m only one person. I can’t eat a whole cow.”

Have you ever eaten a steak so big you couldn’t finish it?

Then, she went to Arizona. She wanted to see the Grand Canyon. The desert sun was so hot that Emma felt like she was melting.

She said, “Arid zone? That’s the perfect name.”

Arid means very dry. That’s why Arizona is called the arid zone.

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Next, she visited Colorado. She imagined red mountains and rivers. But when she arrived, she saw snow everywhere. Emma laughed: “Colorado means red, but all I see is white!”

After that, Emma drove to California. She expected beaches, Hollywood, and sunshine. Instead, she was stuck in traffic. For three hours!

“A land of gold?” she sighed. “More like a land of red brake lights.”

She continued to Oregon. She wanted to see forests and rivers. And yes, she saw them — along with endless rain. Emma muttered: “Maybe Oregon means ‘bring an umbrella.’”

Finally, she reached Washington. She thought of George Washington and history. But the only thing she found was coffee. Coffee shops everywhere. Emma joked: “This state should be called Starbucks.”

When Emma returned home, her friends asked: “So, how was your trip to the West and Southwest?”

She smiled and said: “Well, Texas overfed me, Arizona baked me, Colorado froze me, California trapped me, Oregon soaked me, and Washington caffeinated me. But hey... at least I’ll never forget the state names!”



POV Story – Version 2 (Past, First Person Plural)

Last summer, we traveled through the West and Southwest of the United States.

Our first stop was Texas. We expected friendship, because the name means “friends.” And yes, people greeted us warmly — but they also served us the biggest steaks we had ever seen. We whispered: “Thanks, Texas... but we can’t eat a cow.”

Then, we went to Arizona. We wanted to see the Grand Canyon. But the desert sun was so hot that we felt like we were melting. “Arid zone?” we said. “That’s the perfect name.”

Next, we visited Colorado. We imagined red mountains and rivers. But when we arrived, we saw snow everywhere. We laughed: “Colorado means red, but all we see is white!”

After that, we drove to California. We expected beaches, Hollywood, and sunshine. Instead, we spent three hours stuck in traffic.

"A land of gold?" we sighed. "More like a land of red brake lights."

Then, we continued to Oregon. We wanted to see forests and rivers. And yes, we saw them — along with endless rain. We muttered: "Maybe Oregon means 'bring an umbrella.'"

Finally, we reached Washington. We thought of George Washington and history. But the only thing we found was coffee. Coffee shops everywhere.

We joked: "This state should be called Starbucks."

When we returned home, our friends asked:

"So, how was your trip to the West and Southwest?"

We smiled and said:

"Well, Texas overfed us, Arizona baked us, Colorado froze us, California trapped us, Oregon soaked us, and Washington caffeinated us.

But hey... we'll never forget the state names!"

That's all for today! We finished our trip across the United States and learned the stories behind many state names. Listen to the episodes again to remember more and speak more easily.

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