

A Practical Course in Standard
(GB) British English Pronunciation

SAMPLE



The
Sound
of
English
by Joseph Hudson

PDF

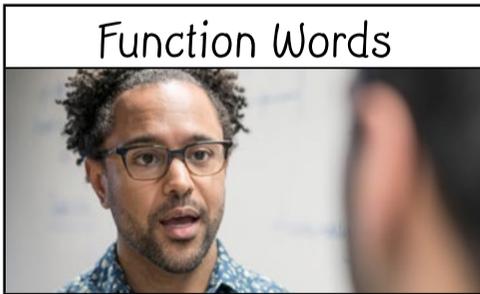


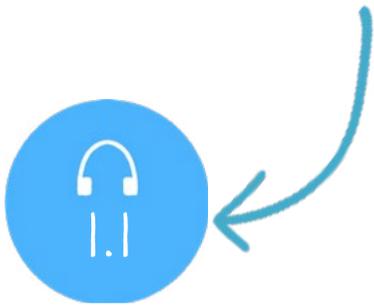
pronunciation
STUDIO



1

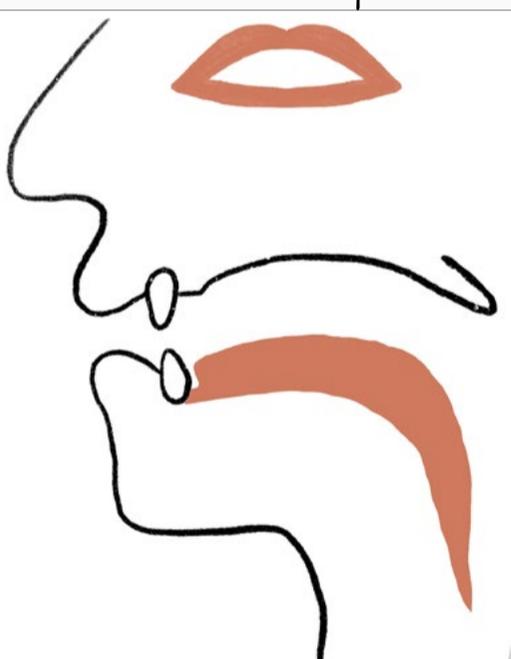
/ə/ - the Schwa





/ə/

①

| Spellings | Examples | Position |
|-----------|----------|---|
| a | again | <p>Mid jaw, centre tongue, unrounded lips.</p>  |
| e | sofa | |
| | persuade | |
| o | corner | |
| | obey | |
| u | onion | |
| | success | |
| | maximum | |

The German actor's second performance was **sublime**.
Listen to the **thunder**, the weather's **horrendous** tonight.

/ ə /

- Match the words with their pictures and IPA transcriptions:

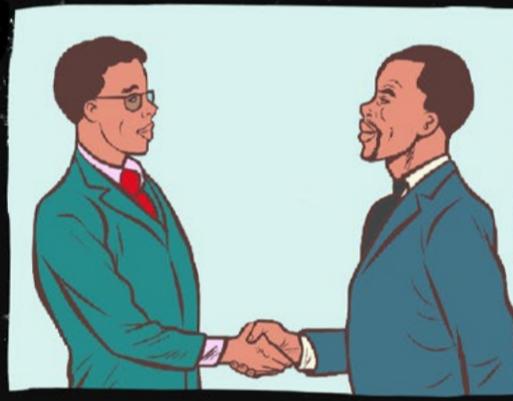
applause laughter connect surprise



/ə'plɔ:z/



/kə'nekt/



/sə'praɪz/



/'lɑ:ftə/



Tap to see the answers.



- Which letter is pronounced /ə/ in each word?



The schwa sound /ə/ is **commonly spelt in written English with any of < a, e, o, u >**.
It only appears on **unstressed syllables**.



- *Find a schwa sound in each word:*



surround perhaps
apron assist
extra obtain
dancer collect
pursuit applaud
forum woman
anthem suspend
lawyer terror
collar spectrum
button problem



Function Words

- How many schwa sounds /ə/ can you hear in the sentence?





Many small grammatical words like ‘for’, ‘of’ & ‘the’ are **normally pronounced with /ə/ in connected speech.**

These words are **function words.**

Function words include **prepositions, auxiliary verbs, pronouns, conjunctions & articles:**

| Example | IPA |
|-----------------------------------|-------|
| 1. go <u>to</u> work | /tə/ |
| 2. pass <u>the</u> biscuits | /ðə/ |
| 3. ride <u>a</u> bike | /ə/ |
| 4. send <u>some</u> money | /səm/ |
| 5. this <u>could</u> happen | /kəd/ |
| 6. where <u>was</u> Peter | /wəz/ |
| 7. bring <u>them</u> back | /ðəm/ |
| 8. more <u>than</u> three | /ðən/ |
| 9. what <u>do</u> they want | /də/ |
| 10. <u>as</u> good <u>as</u> gold | /əz/ |

- Complete the sentences with a word from the box below:

her than some ~~can~~ to
from your should are the

1. /kən/ we go now? *can*
2. It's more /ðən/ 30 degrees outside!
3. Let's go /tə/ Thailand this summer.
4. I met /ðə/ Smiths last night.
5. Why /ə/ you looking at me like that?
6. We /ʃəd/ meet up soon.
7. I'd like /səm/ more coffee please.
8. Is that /jə/ wedding ring?
9. /hə/ first husband is a designer.
10. He's originally /frəm/ Greece.



/grɪs/

Weak vs. Strong



- Compare the pronunciations of the word 'from' in this dialogue:

Where are you from?

I'm from London.

2
15



Many function words have **2 possible pronunciations**, a **weak pronunciation** and a **strong pronunciation**:

| Function Word | Strong Pronunciation | Weak Pronunciation |
|---------------|----------------------|--------------------|
| are | /ɑː/ | /ə/ |
| can | /kæn/ | /kən/ |
| to | /tuː/ | /tə/ |
| some | /sʌm/ | /səm/ |
| for | /fɔː/ | /fə/ |
| from | /frɒm/ | /frəm/ |
| and | /ən(d)/ | /ənd/ |
| them | /ðem/ | /ðəm/ |
| your | /jɔː/ | /jə/ |



The **weak pronunciation** is normally used in **connected speech**:

"I'm from London." /frəm/
"We'll manage for now." /fə/

The **strong pronunciation** is normally used for one of the following three reasons:

i) the function word is **at the end** of a unit/sentence

"Where are you from?" /frɒm/
"I don't know what it is for." /fɔː/

ii) the function word is **emphasised**

"It's French in style but it isn't from France." /frɒm/
"FOR THE LAST TIME!" /fɔː/

iii) the function word is **in isolation**

"From." /frɒm/
"For." /fɔː/





- Decide if the underlined word is weak or strong:

- A) Can we go to the shops now? weak
B) You can. I'm staying in. strong
- A) I don't know who these clothes are for.
B) They're not for me.
- A) That is some building.
B) It needs some work on the roof though.
- A) Your shirt's dirty!
B) Well your trousers are torn.
- A) Shall we go to the cinema?
B) I don't really want to.
- A) Ask them if they'd like to join us.
B) Them? No way.
- A) What are you doing?
B) Are you sure you want to know?
- A) Look, I've got money and nice clothes.
B) And? I'm not going to go out with you.



/to shops/



< er > Endings

In General American English, the final < r > is pronounced, whereas in General British, words with < er > endings end with schwa:



| American | British |
|--------------------|---------|
| /ər/ | /ə/ |
| water <u>er</u> | |
| further <u>er</u> | |
| copper <u>er</u> | |
| sister <u>er</u> | |
| cap <u>er</u> | |
| meander <u>er</u> | |
| greener <u>er</u> | |
| cylinder <u>er</u> | |

*San Francisco
USA*

1

Tap to return.

1.2



/ə'plɔ:z/ – applause
/lɑ:ftə/ – laughter
/kə'nekt/ – connect
/sə'praɪz/ – surprise

1.4



/sə'raʊnd/
/pə'haps/
/'eɪprən/
/ə'sɪst/
/'ɛkstrə/
/əb'teɪn/
/'dɑ:nsə/
/kə'lekt/
/pə'sju:t/
/ə'plɔ:d/
/'fɔ:rəm/
/'wʊmən/
/'ænθəm/
/sə'spend/
/'lɔ:ə/
/'tɛrə/
/'kɒlə/
/'spektrəm/
/'bʌtən/
/'prɒbləm/

1.5



There are 2 schwa sounds:

The charts are done.

/ ðə tʃɑ:ts ə dʌn /

1.7



1. /kən/ we go now? **can**
2. It's more /ðən/ 30 degrees outside! **than**
3. Let's go /tə/ Thailand this summer. **to**
4. I met /ðə/ Smiths last night. **the**
5. Why /ə/ you looking at me like that? **are**
6. We /ʃəd/ meet up soon. **should**
7. I'd like /səm/ more coffee please. **some**
8. Is that /jə/ wedding ring? **your**
9. /hə/ first husband is a designer. **her**
10. He's originally /frəm/ Greece. **from**

1.8



In “Where are you from?” the pronunciation of “from” is strong: /frɒm/.

In “I’m from London.” the pronunciation of “from” is weak: /frəm/.

1.11



1.
 - A) Can we go to the shops now? *weak*
 - B) You can. I'm staying in. *strong*

2.
 - A) I don't know who these clothes are for. *strong*
 - B) They're not for me. *weak*

3.
 - A) That is some building. *strong*
 - B) It needs some work on the roof though. *weak*

4.
 - A) Your shirt's dirty! *weak*
 - B) Well your trousers are torn. *strong*

5.
 - A) Shall we go to the cinema? *weak*
 - B) I don't really want to. *strong*

6.
 - A) Ask them if they'd like to join us. *weak*
 - B) Them? No way. *strong*

7.
 - A) What are you doing? *strong*
 - B) Are you sure you want to know? *weak*

8.
 - A) Look, I've got money and nice clothes. *weak*
 - B) And? I'm not going to go out with you. *strong*

Congratulations!

/kəngrætʃʊ'leɪʃ(ə)nz/

You've completed chapter 1 and you know all about the schwa /ə/. If you'd like to continue, **the full course contains:**

Price: **£19.99**

- Detailed **drills, notes** and **illustrations**.
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