

A Practical Course in Standard  
(GB) British English Pronunciation

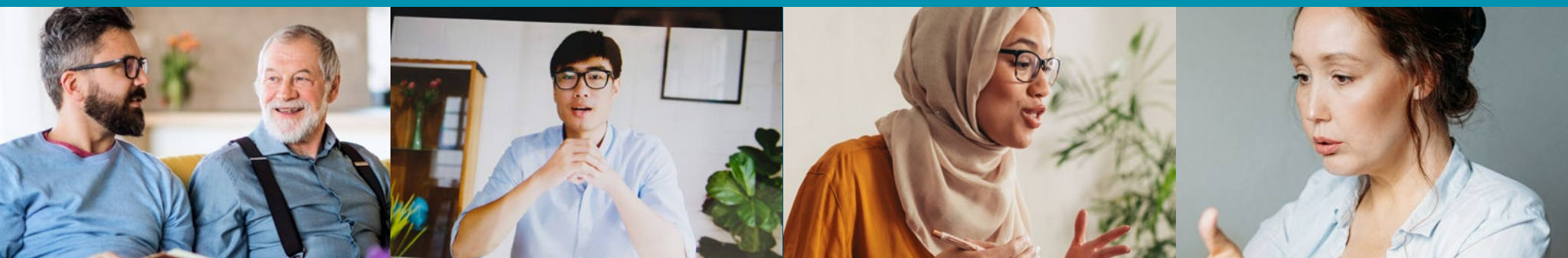
SAMPLE



# The Sound of English

by Joseph Hudson

PDF



pronunciation  
STUDIO



# 1

## /ə/ - the Schwa



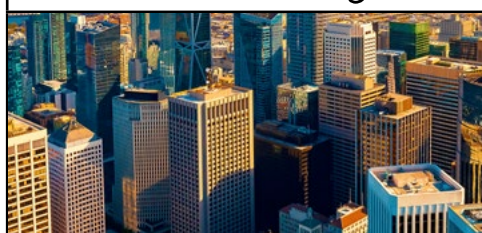
Function Words

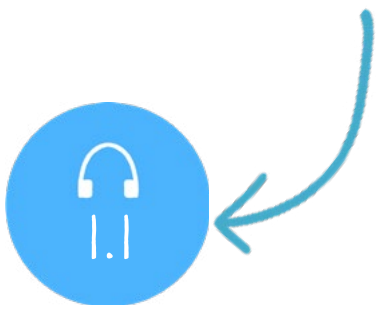


Weak vs Strong



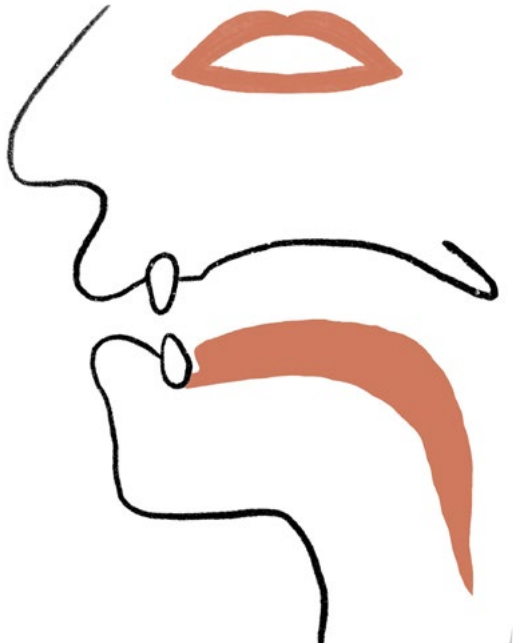
< er > Endings





/ə/

0

Spellings	Examples	Position
a	again	
	sofa	
e	persuade	
	corner	
o	obey	
	onion	
u	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'plɔːz/



/kə'nekt/



/sə'praɪz/



/'lɑːftə/



Tap to see the answers.

2  
14

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



①

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

②

- 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

?  
14

# Function Words

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

1.5

The charts  
are done!

2.15



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	/kən/	/kən/
to	/tuː/	/tə/
some	/sʌm/	/səm/
for	/fɔː/	/fə/
from	/frɒm/	/frəm/
and	/ən(d)/	/ən(d)/
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.



/ðə ʃɒps/





# < 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>	
caper <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'plɔːz/ – applause  
/'lɑːftə/ – laughter  
/kə'nekt/ – connect  
/sə'praɪz/ – surprise

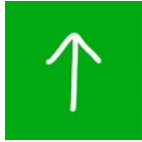
1.4



/sə'raʊnd/  
/pə'haps/  
/'eɪprən/  
/ə'sɪst/  
/'ekstrə/  
/əb'tem/  
/'dɑːnsə/  
/kə'lekt/  
/pə'sjuːt/  
/ə'plɔːd/  
/'fɔːrəm/  
/'wʊmən/  
/'anθəm/  
/sə'spend/  
/'lɔːə/  
/'tɛrə/  
/'kɒlə/  
/'spektrəm/  
/'bʌtən/  
/'prɒbləm/



1.5



There are 2 schwa sounds:

The charts are done.

/ ðə tʃɑːts 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!

/kəŋgratʃʊ'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**.
- **9 Chapters** (130+ pages) with **full audio**.
- **Multiple formats** (pdf, epub & web).
- **Lifetime updates**, instant download.



