

Words containing more than two syllables also exhibit distinctive accentual patterns associated with pitch, stress, and quality cues, e.g.:

	Noun/Adjective	Verb
<i>alternate</i>	/,ə'l'tɜ:nət/ /əl'tɜ:nət/	/'ɔ:l'te:nɪt/
<i>associate</i>	/ə'səʊsɪət, -stət, -fjət/	/ə'səʊsɪ, et, ə'səʊsɪ, et/
<i>attribute</i>	/'ætrɪ, bjʊt/	/ə'trɪ, bjʊt/
<i>envelope</i>	/'envə, ləʊp/	/'ɪn, vɛləp/
<i>reprimand</i>	/'reprɪ, mɑ:nd/	/'reprɪ, mɑ:nd/
<i>interchange</i>	/'ɪntə, tʃeɪndʒ/	/'ɪntə, tʃeɪndʒ/
<i>compliment</i>	/'kɒmplɪ, mɛnt/	/'kɒmplɪ, mɛnt/
<i>supplement</i>	/'sʌplɪ, mɛnt/	/'sʌplɪ, mɛnt/
<i>estimate</i>	/'estɪ, mɛnt/	/'estɪ, mɛnt/
<i>intimate</i>	/'ɪntɪ, mɛnt/	/'ɪntɪ, mɛnt/
<i>moderate</i>	/'mɒdə, reɪt/	/'mɒdə, reɪt/
<i>prophecy</i>	/'prɒfɪ, sɪ/	/'prɒfɪ, sɪ/
<i>separate</i>	/'seɪpə, reɪt/	/'seɪpə, reɪt/
<i>invalid</i>	/'ɪn, vɛld/ ('sɪk')	/'ɪn, vɛld/ ('vɔɪd')

9.06 Elision

Since OE, it has always been a feature of the structure of English words that the weakly accented syllables have undergone a process of gradation, i.e. loss of phonemes or obscuration of vowels (see also §§ 7.20, 7.31). The same process of gradation, with resultant contraction, may be observed in operation in PresE. It is important, however, to distinguish between cases of elision which have been established in the language for some time (although the spelling may still reflect an earlier, fuller form) and those which have become current only recently. In these latter cases, the forms exhibiting elision and syncope are typical of rapid, colloquial speech, whereas more formal speech tends to retain the fuller form under the preservative influence of the spelling. The examples of elided word forms in colloquial speech which are given below are independent of the type of reduction affecting particular words and syllables under weak accent in connected speech (see § 10.04). They are also to be distinguished from the reduced forms in various types of regional and popular speech, which the educated

speaker might characterize as vulgar, e.g. *recognize* as /reknə,ɪz/, *refactory* as /ses'fæktəri/, *cigarette* as /sɪ'grɛt/, *possible* as /'pɒsəbl/, *Waterloo* as /wɔ:'lu:/, *lovely* as /'lʌli/, etc.

(1) Vowels¹

(a) *Established*.—Loss of vowels under weak accent within the word has occurred at various stages of the language's development and is now established, e.g.—initially, *state*, *scholar*, *sample*; medially, *Gloucester*, *marriage*, *halfpenny*, *evening*, *chimney*, *curtsey*, *forecastle* /'fɔ:ksl/, *gooseberry*, *Salisbury* /sɔ:lzbrɪ/; in a final syllable, *time*, *name*, *love*, *hands* (< *handles*), *eaten*, *written*, *cousin*.

(b) *Present colloquial*.—In PresE such elision is likely to take place especially in a sequence of unaccented syllables, in respect of /ə/ and /ɪ/. Thus, in post-nuclear (post-tonic) positions, in the sequence consonant + /ə/ + /r/ + weak vowel, e.g. *preferable* tends increasingly to lose the /ə/ of the second syllable, /fər/ being reduced to /fr/; similar reductions affect /ər/ following other consonants, e.g. in *repertory*, *temperature*, *comparable*, *territory*, *lavatory*, *temporary* /'tempəri/, *anniversary*, *incarcage*, *category*, *factory*, *robbery*, *labour-exchange* /'leɪbrɪks, tʃeɪndʒ/, *murderer* /'mɜ:dərə/, *customary*, *camera*, *honorabile*, *scullery*, *suffering*, *beverage*, *rhinoceros*, *nursery*, *Nazareth*, *fisheries*, *treasury*, *natural* /'nætʃrəl/, *dangerous*, *utterance*, *history*, *ordinary*. In the same way, there may be an elision of a weak vowel following a consonant and preceding /ɪ/, or the reduction of syllabic /l/ to syllabic marginal /l/, in *grappling*, *doubling*, *fatalist*, *paddling*, *batchelor*, *specialist*, *usually*, *insolent*, *easily*, *carefully*, *buffalo*, *novelist*, *family*, *panelling*, *chancellor*, etc. Note, too, frequent loss of post-nuclear /ə/ or /ɪ/ in *university* /,ju:nɪ'vɜ:stɪ/, *probably* /'prɒbəbli/, *difficult* /'dɪfɪklt/, *national* /'næʃnəl/, *fashionable* /'feɪʃnəbl/, *reasonably* /'ri:znəbli/, *parliament* /'pɑ:lmənt/, *government* /'gʌvnmənt/.

In pre-nuclear positions, /ə/ or /ɪ/ of the weak syllable preceding the primary accent is apt to be lost in very rapid speech, especially when the tonic syllable has initial /l/ or /r/,² e.g. *police*, *Palladium*, *parade*, *terrific*, *correct*, *collision*, *believe*, *balloon*, *barometer*, *direction*, *delightful*, *gorilla*, *galoshes*, *ferocious*, *philology*, *veranda*, *voluptuous*, *saloon*, *solicitor*, *syringe*, *charade*, etc.; also, with a continuant consonant preceding and a consonant other than /l/ or /r/ following, in *phonetics*,

¹ For absorption of the 2nd element of a diphthong before another vowel, see § 7.27.
² Such elisions in word initial syllables are more likely when the preceding word, belonging to the same group, ends in a vowel, e.g. *the police* /ðə 'pɪlɪs/, *I believe* /aɪ 'bi:liv/, but *local police* /ləʊkl 'pɔ:lɪs/, *can't believe* /kɑ:nt be'li:v/.

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