

Weak forms

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Many words have two pronunciations called 'strong' and weak forms. The weak forms show reduction or obscuration of vowels towards / I /, / ʊ / and in most cases / ə /. Most of the words having weak forms belong to the grammatical category, called function words such as auxiliary verbs, prepositions, conjunctions, pronouns, possessive adjectives and articles.

Vowel changes

Strong Vowels	Weak Vowels	Examples	Strong vowels	Weak vowels	Examples
i:	ɪ	be	ʌ	ə	but
u:	ʊ/ə	do	ɑ:	ə	are
ʊ	ə	could	ɒ	ə	of
e	ə	them	ɔ:	ə	for
æ	ə	and	ɜ:	ə	her

II. Activity : Transcribe the following sentences using the weak forms when necessary.

1. I went to the hotel and booked a room for two nights for my father and his best friend
2. Give it to me!
3. It takes three hours to get from here to London
4. Could you give me the salt, please?
5. What's that knife for?
6. The book that she bought was more expensive than mine.
7. They can walk to school tomorrow; they're old enough.
8. He's as good as his brother at playing cards; you should watch him some day.
9. These carrots are from Granny. She's fond of vegetables.
10. That boy over there is very clever.
11. There's enough water in the glass.
12. How are you?
13. She has gone very early
13. They have three houses.

List of common English words that have weak forms (used when the word is not stressed) (Perfect English grammar)

a	/ə/	I've got a new dress.
am	/əm/ /m/	I'm not going home, am I?
an	/ən/	That's an apple
and	/ənd/ /ən/	We need some salt and pepper.
any	/əni/	Do you have any money?
are	/ə/	They are at school just now.
as	/əz/	It was as big as an elephant.
at	/ət/	She works at night.
be	/bi/ /bi/	He's going to be late.
been	/bin/	Have you been here long?
but	/bət/	The food is good but the service is terrible.
can	/kən/ /kn/	Can you come early?
could	/kəd/	I think he could pass the exam.
do	/də/	Do you need any help?
does	/dəz/	He doesn't live in London, does he?
for	/fə/	It's a present for my dad.

from	/frəm/	That book's from Julia.
had	/həd/ /əd/ /d/	I had a car when I was at university.
has	/həz/ /əz/ /z/	He has been here for years.
have	/həv/ /əv/ /v/	I've had lunch already.
he	/hi/ /i/	She thinks he's handsome.
her	/ə/ /hə/	Tom told her that the meeting had been cancelled.
him	/ɪm/	I've bought him some chocolate.
his	/ɪz/	That's his last chance.
I	/ɪ/	I wish I had gone to bed earlier.
me	/mi/	John called me last night.
must	/mʌst/ /məs/	You really must take your umbrella.
of	/əv/ /v/	That's part of the problem.

our	/ɑː/	She dropped her coffee on our rug.
shall	/ʃəl/	Shall we go out for dinner?
she	/ʃi/	I think she's gone to the library.
should	/ʃəd/	You really should get a haircut.
some	/səm/ /sm/	They bought some bread this morning.
than	/ðən/ /ðn/	This part of London is much busier than where I live.
the	/ðə/	Have you seen the front door keys?
them	/ðəm/	We dropped them off at the airport.
there	/ðə/ /ðər/	There's some water in the glass.
to	/tə/	Are you going to the party tonight?
us	/əs/ /s/	Lucy gave us one of her kittens.
was	/wəz/	It was a beautiful day.
we	/wi/	I wonder when we should leave.
were	/wə/	They were late again!
who	/hu/	Do you know who that girl is?
will	/wəl/ /əl/ /l/	He'll arrive later.
would	/wəd/ /d/	If I were you, I would study a bit more.
you	/jə/ /ju/	Do you like chocolate?
yours	/jə/ /jət/	Is that your coat?

See www.perfect-english-grammar.com/english-listening.html to hear me saying the example phrases.