

ɜː pronunciation

Southern British English (RP)

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Remember!

ɜː is a long vowel.

There is no r sound!

i:	ɪ	ʊ	u:	ɪə	eɪ		
e	ə	ɜː	ɔ:	ʊə	ɔɪ	əʊ	
æ	ʌ	a:	ɒ	eə	aɪ	aʊ	
p	b	t	d	tʃ	dʒ	k	g
f	v	θ	ð	s	z	ʃ	ʒ
m	n	ŋ	h	l	r	w	j



[download complete mp3](#) (length:10m 16s size:3.5 MB)

ɜː words

[download words mp3](#)
(3m 52s 1.3 MB)

er, her, were, sir, fur
 turn, burn, learn, earn
 girl, early, curl, curly, world
 earth, Perth, earthquake, birthday
 church, birch, search, lurch
 dirt, flirt, shirt, skirt, alert, Kurt, Burt/Bert
 word, heard, bird, third, Kurd

first, worst, third, thirty, thirteen
 nurse, purse, curse, hearse, Thursday, thirsty
 herb, curb, verb, adverb, disturb, urban
 prefer, urgent, perfect, journey

work, perk, Turk, Turkey
 certain, curtain, circle, circus
 surf, burger, murder, burden
 absurd, person, research, occur, return
 firm, worm, term, perm

Berlin, Persia, Serbia, Serb, Birmingham
 Mervin, Cuthbert, Kermit
 Shirley, Bernadette, Ursula

chauffeur, entrepreneur, Birmingham, controversial

Try these sound pairs:

[download sound pairs mp3](#)
(1m 31s 507 KB)

a:	ɜː	ɔ:
far	fur	four
dark	Dirk	dork
star	stir	store
hard	heard	hoard
barn	burn	born
cart	Kurt	caught
farm	firm	form
park	perk	pork

eə	ɜː	ɪə
air	er	ear
where	were	we're
hair	her	here/hear
stair	stir	steer
fair	fur	fear

NOTE: In southern British English we do not pronounce the r in the words above.

The exception to this rule is when a word which ends in r (e.g. four, star, air, where) is followed by a word beginning with a vowel. This is called a **linking r**:

linking r		no linking r	
four o'clock	'fɔːrə'klɒk	four thirty	fɔː'θɜːti
far away	'fɑːrə'weɪ	far from here	'fɑːfrəm'hɪə
her apple	hər'æpl̩	her dog	hədɒg

Now try these sentences: [download sentences mp3](#)

Her skirt was dirty. (4m 44s 1.6 MB)
 I could murder a burger! (=I really want to eat a burger now!)
 Shirley's learning German in Berlin.
 Ursula prefers not to wear fur.
 Bernadette hurt her ankle at the first hurdle.
 Is it worth learning to surf in Perth?
 The three girls prefer Persian to Turkish perfume.
 Burt Turner took his German friend Kurt to the circus.
 The journey from Perth to Birmingham took thirty hours.
 Mervin went on an excursion to Jersey and Guernsey.
 Bert prefers to wear his purple shirt to church.
 There was an earthquake in Perth on Thursday the 3rd.
 It occurred to Earl that his girlfriend's curls were perfect.
 Every Thursday Herbie returns early from work and goes surfing.

Check where the ɜː sounds were:

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