

ə (schwa) pronunciation

Southern British English (RP)

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ə is the most common sound in English!

Remember:

ə is a short vowel and is usually unstressed.

There is no **r** sound!

i:	ɪ	ʊ	u:	ɪə	eɪ		
e	ə	ɜ:	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



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ə words

a spelling	<u>a</u> , <u>an</u> [a cat, a dog, an apple, an egg] ban <u>an</u> a, <u>an</u> other, Can <u>ad</u> a, Al <u>ab</u> ama prob <u>ab</u> ly, veget <u>ab</u> le, com <u>for</u> table As <u>ia</u> , Afr <u>ic</u> a, Austr <u>i</u> a <u>a</u> bout, <u>a</u> ccount, <u>a</u> bove, <u>a</u> gain, <u>a</u> ttack, extr <u>a</u> , av <u>a</u> tar, wom <u>a</u> n, post <u>m</u> an
e spelling	the, level, pet <u>i</u> tion, cele <u>b</u> rate, re <u>pe</u> at eat <u>e</u> n, brok <u>e</u> n, writ <u>e</u> n, chos <u>e</u> n forgott <u>e</u> n, g <u>i</u> ven
i spelling	pencil, pupil
o spelling	pot <u>o</u> ato, <u>o</u> ccur, <u>o</u> ndition, avoc <u>o</u> do, oppo <u>n</u> ent, <u>o</u> nvention, pr <u>is</u> on, <u>l</u> ion, vis <u>i</u> on, inform <u>o</u> tion, act <u>o</u> n, comp <u>e</u> tition, opt <u>o</u> n, phot <u>o</u> graphy
u spelling	difficult, camp <u>u</u> s, circ <u>u</u> s, supp <u>l</u> y, support

words ending in...

-ar	gramm <u>a</u> r, calend <u>a</u> r, simil <u>a</u> r, vic <u>a</u> r, schol <u>a</u> r particul <u>a</u> r, begg <u>a</u> r, sol <u>a</u> r, circul <u>a</u> r, alt <u>a</u> r
-er	moth <u>e</u> r, fath <u>e</u> r, broth <u>e</u> r, sist <u>e</u> r, ord <u>e</u> r, summ <u>e</u> r, dinn <u>e</u> r, travell <u>e</u> r, robb <u>e</u> r, cle <u>v</u> er, charact <u>e</u> r, priso <u>n</u> er
-or	act <u>o</u> r, doct <u>o</u> r, auth <u>o</u> r, direct <u>o</u> r, err <u>o</u> r, visit <u>o</u> r, profess <u>o</u> r, auth <u>o</u> r, minor
-our	col <u>o</u> ur, hum <u>o</u> ur, <u>o</u> ur, <u>h</u> our, vig <u>o</u> ur, endeavour (spelt <i>color, humor</i> , etc. in US)
-re	cent <u>e</u> r, met <u>e</u> r, kilomet <u>e</u> r, massacr <u>e</u> , theat <u>e</u> r (spelt <i>center, meter</i> , etc. in US)
-ure	pic <u>t</u> ure, pleasur <u>e</u> , signatur <u>e</u> , manufactur <u>e</u> , agricultur <u>e</u> , literatur <u>e</u> , natur <u>e</u> , adventur <u>e</u>
-ur	murm <u>u</u> r, sulphur

There are many many words with ə, here are a few more:

conscious, precious, delicious
nation, station, information, operation
original, practical, animal, criminal, formal, factual
actually, instant, tomorrow, today, tonight
Alan, Stephen, Malcolm, Albert Sarah, Clara, Laura, Helen
understand, professonal, operational, analyse, analysis

Now try these sentences:

- Another banana.
- An invitation to dinner.
- How about a cup of tea?
- They've got a lot of problems.
- What are you doing tonight?
- He's a professor of literature.
- Do you understand the teacher?
- I've got two brothers and a sister.
- He probably grows his own vegetables.
- The animals were originally from Canada.
- The director of photography made an error.
- He's actually a very clever and practical person.
- The official report never mentioned the accident.
- The soldier performed a rather clever manoeuvre.
- This is one of the most delicious meals I've ever eaten.

Answers:

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pronunciation continued...

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gonna... wanna... gotta... coulda... kinda... dunno...

These are very informal colloquial English.
 It's better to recognise than use them. Use them
 down the pub and with friends.

I gotta go.

(=I've got to go)

She's kinda nice.

(=she's kind of nice)

I wanna see if he's gonna win.

(=I want to see if he's going to win.)

I dunno. Are ya gonna go?

(=I don't know. Are you going to go?)

I coulda won that game.

(=I could have won that game.)

Cos I had to leave early.

(cos='cause=because [colloquial])

D'ya you wanna 'nother banana?

(Do you want another banana?).

Dunno. How much time've we got?

(=[I] don't know. How much time have we got?)

What kind of music d'ya like?

(=What kind of music do you like?)

A man's gotta do what a man's gotta do.

(=A man's got to do what a man's got to do)

He shoulda said sorry.

(He should have said sorry.)

D'ya think we could go to the cinema?

(=Do you think we could go to the cinema?)

When d'ya wanna eat?

(=When do you want to eat)

Pass us the salt would ya?

(Pass us[=me] the salt, would you?)

I would've taken an earlier bus if I'da known.

(=I would have taken an earlier bus if I'd have known)

Advanced ə!

In speech, especially fast speech, we use shorter version of words. These are called 'weak' forms.

Here is a list of words whose weak forms use ə:

a, am, an, and, are, as, at, but, can, could, do, does, for, from, had, has, have, her, of, shall, some, than, that, the, them, there, to, us, was, we, were, who, would, you

Fish 'n chips (=fish and chips)

Shall we go?

Let's go to the shop

More than that.

We can stay.

These are cheap.

He's as good as gold.

There was a loud bang.

Where were you?

He wanted to show that he was brave.

As far as I know, it's better than the other one.

If I had had a book...

Try these sound pairs:

Words marked * are the 'weak' forms of different words

i:	ə
keys	cos/cause*
NT	enter
T	to*
thee	the
I	ə
him	h'm* (him)
in	'un*
enemies	enemas
whiskeys	whiskers
badges	badgers
cities	sitters
cookies	cookers
U	ə
backwoods	backwards
u:	ə
boot	but*
two/too	to*
whom	h'm* (him)

e	ə
workmen	workman
postmen	postman
M	'em*
N	'un*
document v	document n
ɜ:	ə
curse	cos/cause*
earn	'un*
upturn	Upton
diverse	divers
chauffeuse	chauffeurs
ɔ:	ə
awe	a*
four	for*
cause	cos/cause*
centaur	centre
concord	conquered
consort	concert
audition	addition

æ	ə
Ann	'un*
am	'em*
ham	h'm* (him)
superman	postman
ʌ	ə
hum	h'm* (him)
a:	ə
ah	a*
arm	'em*
cars	cos*
ta	to*
ɒ	ə
on	an*
oz	as*