



**Pronunciation: focusing on
weak forms**



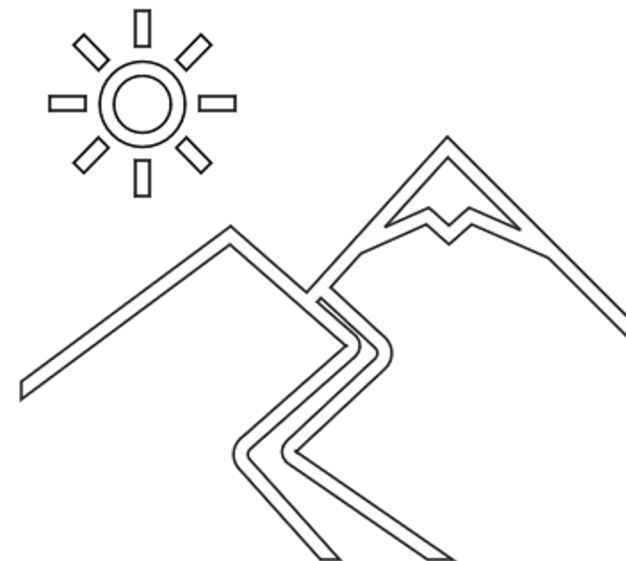
Introduction

Welcome to **Pronunciation Live25!**

- A new feature of English Online
- Free **pronunciation** presentations
- Download the PDF after booking
- **Practise on mute**
- Sit back and enjoy the ride!

Please be on mute

You can keep your cams off



Lead-in



Listen to me read this famous line from a Shakespeare play. Which is the correct pronunciation?

- 1) To be or not to be, that is the question
- 2) To be or not to be, that is the question
- 3) To be or not to be, that is the question

Let's focus - weak forms

Listen to me say these sentences. Which words are **not stressed?**

1. Let's go to the park.
2. The meeting starts at 6.
3. Have you got to leave?

Meaning and use

Most words have a **strong form** and a **weak form**. Weak forms occur when the focus of the stress is on other words in the sentence.

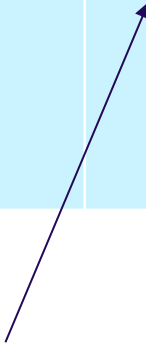
The stressed words in a sentence are usually the **content words** such as the main **verbs**, **nouns**, **adjectives**, **pronouns** and **adverbs** that carry the meaning of the sentence.

Function words such as **articles**, **pronouns**, **auxiliary verbs** and **prepositions** are not usually stressed in connected speech.

We only usually stress function words when we want to **add emphasis** or if they appear at the end of a sentence.

Form

Function word	Strong form	Weak form
to	/tu:/	/tə/



When the function word is pronounced in its weak form, we use the 'schwa' sound. To make this sound, open your mouth and relax your tongue, lips and jaw. Push the sound out. Repeat after me but stay on mute.

Form

Function word	Strong form	Weak form
to	/tu:/	/tə/
at	/æt/	/ət/
for	/fɔ:/	/fə/
of	/ɒv/	/əv/
the	/ði:/	/ðə/
an	/æn/	/ən/
this	/ðɪs/	/ðəs/
has	/hæz/	/həs/
have	/hæv/	/həv/
are	/ɑ:/	/ə/
was	/wɒz/	/wəz/
You	/ju:/	/jə/

Keep yourself muted
and practice
repeating the sounds
after me

Practice

Listen to me repeating the sentences, notice how I stress the words in **bold** and use weak sounds for the other words.

1. I **need** to **get** to the **station**.
2. The **projects** have **been** a **success**.
3. Are you **driving** to **work tomorrow**?

Keep yourselves muted and repeat the sentences after me.

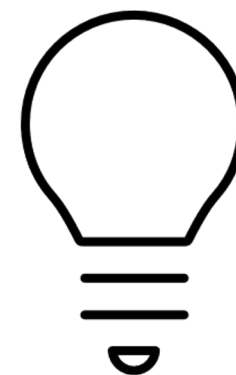
Key point

Remember, in English we don't stress every word in the sentence.

Function words are usually pronounced in their weak forms.

Pronunciation tip:

The next time you read something out loud in English, underline the stressed words.



Pronunciation Checkout

Identify and write down the stressed words in each sentence (write them in the chat box).

1. The project proposal has been accepted.
2. I used to love speaking to the boss.
3. Have they arrived at the meeting yet?
4. I was reading an interesting report this morning.



Pronunciation Checkout - Answers

Identify and write down the stressed words in each sentence (write them in the chat box).

1. The **project proposal** has been **accepted**.
2. I used to **love speaking** to the **boss**.
3. Have they **arrived** at the **meeting** yet?
4. I was **reading** an **interesting report** this **morning**.

Now, repeat the sentences after me. Focus on the correct sentence stress.



Thank you for attending this presentation!

Review the next few slides for lessons linked to this Live25 webinar.



<https://premierskillsenglish.britishcouncil.org/skills/listen/podcasts/perfect-pronunciation-weak-forms>

If you're an IELTS Coach student, now you're ready for...

Speaking

Gifts: effective pronunciation



If you're an English Online student, now you're ready for...

Elementary

Theme: Things around us

Lesson: My things

Pre-intermediate

Theme: Memorable events

Lesson: Being nostalgic

Intermediate

Theme: All about me

Lesson: Presenting opinion

Upper intermediate

Theme: Effective meetings

Lesson: Presenting your ideas

Advanced

Theme: Business communication

Lesson: Presentations for international audiences





If you're an English for Work student, now you're ready for...

Elementary

Theme: At work

Lesson: Questions, questions

Pre-intermediate

Theme: Looking for new opportunities

Lesson: Career plans

Intermediate

Theme: Ready to work

Lesson: Contracts of employment

Upper intermediate

Theme: Changes of plan

Lesson: Communicating appropriately

Advanced

Theme: Changing and growing a business

Lesson: Addressing concerns about a merger