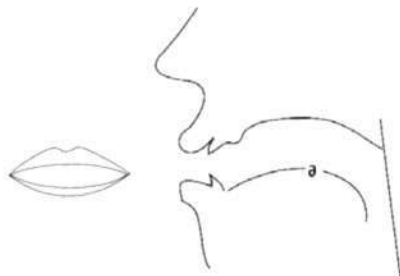


Lesson 6: The [ə] neutral vowel (schwa) as in "banana"

Speech organs position:

Jaw is half open, relaxed tongue and lips. Middle of the tongue is halfway up. Tongue position is a bit lower than when pronouncing [ɜ:] (Lesson 5). Tongue is not going forward. The sound is very short.



[ə ə ə]

A16

Words

Listen and repeat. Look at the mouth diagram to help you position your lips, tongue and jaw for the target sound.

The first syllable
unstressed

Highlighted bold letters pronounced as [ə]

away, agree, **a**buse, **a**board, **a**gainst, **a**dvice,
attain, **a**dvan**a**ce, cana**a**, co**r**rect, po**l**ice, su**p**port

The second syllable
unstressed

do**c**tor, un**d**er, fi**g**ure, co**l**our, abs**e**nt, const**a**nt,
stand**a**rd, ora**a**, for**w**ard, up**w**ard, aw**k**ward

A17

Unstressed positions

and	a	an
Fish a nd chips	Get a spoon	Have a n apple
Salt a nd pepper	Cut a piece	A question and a n answer
Pork a nd beans	Here's a plate	A n aunt and a n uncle
Ladies a nd gentlemen	Lend a hand	Listen to a n announcement

NB: Schwa is the most-used sound in English. Very often, unstressed syllables and words in a sentence are pronounced with a schwa.

A18

Comparison: [ə] and [ɜ:]

[ə]
slog**a**n
for**w**ard
aw**k**ward
stand**a**rd
up**w**ard
back**w**ard

[ɜ:]
g**i**rl
word
th**i**rd
earn
word
work

A19

Sentences

Listen and repeat. Read each sentence aloud slowly at first, then as if you were telling it to someone in a natural way.

1. What **a**re you doing in London? We **a**re looking for **a** hairdresser.
2. Is it made **o**f glass? No, it's made **o**f plastic.
3. What **c**a**n** I do? What **h**a**s** she done? What **h**a**v**e you done?
4. She **h**a**d** done it before she came here.
5. **A**manda, phone call **f**or you!
6. The **c**on**d**uctor of the orchestra was **a**mazed to see the viola player drink **a** scotch **a**nd soda.
7. Tell my sister **A**manda to buy some better bananas **a**s well **a**s potatoes **a**nd tomatoes.



A20

Comparison: stressed and unstressed vowel position

Stressed position	Unstressed position, pronounced with [ə]
What are you looking at ? [æ]	Look at him.
What is it made of ? [ɒ]	It's made of cotton.
Where do you come from ? [ɒ]	I come from Paris.
Who is it for ? [ɔ:]	It's for you.
Wouldn't you agree? [ʊ]	I would say yes.
Weren't you there? [ɜ:]	We were absent.
Wasn't he there? [ɒ]	Yes, he was sitting next to me.

A21

Verses

Listen and copy the intonation and voice modulation on the CD.

My jealousy I can't express,
 Their love they openly confess;
 Her shell-like ears she does not close
To their recital **of** their woes.



Additional exercises:

A: Write down 4 words with the target sound that you often use when speaking English. Practice these words, thinking about your lips, tongue and jaw positions for the target sound.

1. _____ 3. _____

2. _____ 4. _____

B: Write down 4 words with the target sound that you often hear on TV, radio or from your friends/colleagues. Practice these words, thinking about your lips, tongue and jaw positions for the target sound.

1. _____ 3. _____

2. _____ 4. _____