

Words with two pronunciations

Some words in English can be pronounced in two different ways: a **full form** (sometimes called “strong form”), and a **reduced form** (sometimes called “weak form”).

The reduced form is generally a schwa [ə], or sometimes an [ɪ].

These words are both monosyllabic words and grammar words. Lexical words are not concerned.









monosyllabic prepositions		monosyllabic pronouns and possessive adjectives		monosyllabic quantifier		monosyllabic auxiliaries	
full	reduced	full	reduced	full	reduced	full	reduced
at to from for on in	ət tə frəm fə ən ən	you he she we my your his	yə hɪ / I ʃɪ wɪ mɪ yə(r) ɪz	some [sʌm] (certain) 'something 'somebody 'somewhere then that (+ noun)	səm (du – de la – des) then thət (after a verb)	is are was were [wə] been can must would should	z ə(r) wəz wə bɪn kən məst wəd ʃəd

These words are pronounced in their reduced forms, by default.

But they have the full form:

- When at the end of a sentence: “Yes, indeed, we can !” / “What are you looking for?”
- When the auxiliary is negative : isn’t, aren’t, wasn’t, weren’t, can’t, mustn’t, wouldn’t, shouldn’t. Negative auxiliaries are always stressed.
- When they are stressed, for example in an emphasis: “Yes, I *can* do it, contrary to what you think!”

Pair-work: one student will listen to a sentence, and ask his or her partner to read it. Then, give feedback. Then, for the next sentence, you swap over.

1.  What have they been doing? Have they been to London?
2.  Where were you? You were late at your lesson.
3.  He should apologise because he was missing at the last meeting.
4.  Something is wrong in this film. Can somebody explain that to me?
5.  She said that she can’t do it, it is more difficult for her than for me.
6.  You must speak louder to me, or you’ll never get an answer from me.
7.  What do you call it ?
8.  What did you say ?