

7

Carrot, cabbage

Unstressed vowels /ə/ and /ɪ/

A

A28

In words with two or more syllables, at least one syllable is weak (does not have stress).

- Listen to these words which have two syllables, and the second syllable is weak.

carrot cabbage

In weak syllables, native speakers of English very often use the weak vowel sounds /ə/ and /ɪ/.

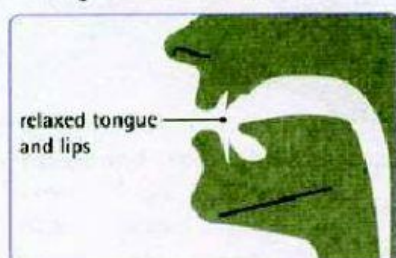
- Listen again to the two words above: the O in *carrot* is pronounced /ə/ and the A in *cabbage* is pronounced /ɪ/.

B

A29

- Look at the mouth diagram to see how to make the sound /ə/.

- Listen to these examples and repeat them. The weak vowels in the unstressed syllables in **bold** are pronounced /ə/.



weak A: away	banana	woman	sugar
weak E: garden	paper	under	
weak O: police	doctor	correct	
weak U: support	figure	colour	



"I ate an apple and a banana in a cinema in Canada."

Important
for listening

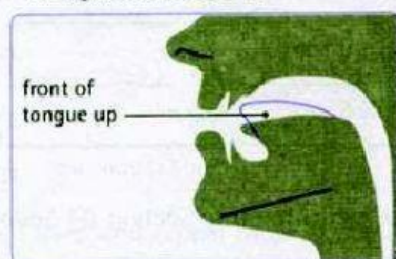
- In words like *paper*, *sugar*, *colour*, the final R is not pronounced in many accents, so *vista* /'vɪstə/ rhymes with *sister* /'sɪstə/, for example.
- Many speakers of English (especially non-native speakers) do not change vowels in weak syllables to /ə/.

C

A30

- Look at the mouth diagram to see how to make the sound /ɪ/.

- Listen to these examples and repeat them. The weak vowels in the unstressed syllables in **black** are pronounced /ɪ/.



weak A: orange	cabbage		
weak E: dances	wanted	begin	women
weak I: music	walking		
weak U: lettuce	minute		



"Alex's lettuces tasted like cabbages."

D

Spelling

Notice in the examples above that nearly any vowel spelling may be pronounced as a weak vowel.



Note: Often, whole words are pronounced as weak syllables, with a weak vowel. For example: half an hour, going to work, Jim was late. See Unit 33.