

Lesson 13 [ə] as in *a, upon, and soda*

PRONOUNCING [ə]

The schwa vowel [ə] is a very short, quick sound. Your lips should be completely relaxed and barely move during its production.

[ə] is the sound that results when ANY vowel in English is unstressed in a word. The vowels in all unstressed syllables almost always sound like [ə]. Any letter or combination of letters can represent the schwa [ə].

Possible Pronunciation Problems

In most languages, vowels are pronounced clearly and distinctly. The schwa [ə] does not exist. In English, unstressed vowels should receive much less force than other vowels in the word. In order to speak fluent English, you must unstress or reduce any vowels that are NOT in accented syllables of words. Vowel reduction to [ə] is not sloppy speech. It is an important feature of spoken English.