

PRONOUNCING [ə]

It is difficult to hear the difference between [ɜ] and [ə] when these sounds are produced in isolation. However, [ə] is produced with much less force and occurs only in unstressed syllables.

Possible Pronunciation Problems

[ə] does not exist in most languages. The position of the lips and jaw is the same as for [ɜ], but the tongue muscles are completely relaxed. [ə] never receives strong emphasis and is found only in unstressed syllables.

Practice

EXERCISE A

 Listen and repeat. Be sure to emphasize [ɜ] less than the other vowels in words.

[ə] In the Middle of Words

liberty butterfly
perhaps flowerpot
surprise understood

[ə] At the End of Words

baker sooner
butter teacher
mirror deliver
mother weather

The vowel [ə] does not occur at the beginning of words.

[ə] Spelled

ar	er	or	ure
sugar	after	color	nature
dollar	paper	actor	picture
collar	father	flavor	feature
regular	farmer	doctor	failure
grammar	silver	razor	measure

note

The major spellings of [ə] are *ar*, *er*, and *or* when the sound occurs in the middle or at the ends of words.

sugar advertise summer colorful doctor