

Pronunciation

How we show pronunciation in the dictionary

All the pronunciations use the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA). All of the symbols are shown in a list inside the back cover of the dictionary. If there are two possible pronunciations we show both of them separated by a comma.

1. British and American pronunciation

If we only show one pronunciation for a word then it is acceptable in British and American English. If there is a difference, we show the British pronunciation first, followed by the American pronunciation after the symbol **US**. We only show the part of the American English pronunciation which is different, like this:

storehouse /'stɔː.haʊs/ **US** /'stɔːr-/

2. Stress

Stress patterns show you which parts of a word you should emphasize when you say the word. We show stress marks in front of the part of the word that should be emphasized.

/' (the primary stress symbol)

This symbol shows you the part of a word that you should emphasize most. For example, in the word **picture** /'pɪk.tʃə/ you should emphasize the first part and in the word **deny** /dɪ'naɪ/ you should emphasize the second part.

/, (the secondary stress symbol)

This symbol shows you the part of the word that has the second most important emphasis. This is important if you are pronouncing a long word with three or more syllables. For example, in the word **submarine** /,sʌb.mə'rɪ:n/ the main emphasis is on the last part of the word but you should also put slight emphasis on the first part of the word as well.

There are some compound nouns and phrases (e.g. **barn dance**, **barrier cream**) where we do not show a separate pronunciation, because the pronunciations of both of the words in the phrase are shown in other parts of the dictionary. You still need to know about the stress in the phrase. We show this by using stress markers above and below the words in the phrase, like this:

'barn ,dance

3. Syllables

In all of the pronunciations there are marks to show you how many syllables the word has. The syllable mark is like a full stop. It comes before each new syllable. For example, in the word **standard** /'stænd.əd/ the syllable mark shows you that the word has two syllables. If we show stress marks in a word, these also show when a new syllables starts. So in a word like **banana** /bə'nɑː.nə/ the stress mark and syllable mark shows you that there are three syllables in the word.

4. Strong forms and weak forms

Some very common words (e.g. **and**, **them**, **of**) have strong and weak pronunciations which are different. The weak forms are more common. For example, the word **them** is shown like this in the dictionary:

them *STRONG* /ðem/, *WEAK* /ðəm/

In a sentence such as 'I saw them leave' the weak form /ðəm/ would be used. If you need to emphasize the word **them** then you need to use the strong form. For example, in the sentence 'They said they saw me but I didn't see them' the strong form /ðem/ would be used.

Pronunciation Symbols

Vowel sounds

Short vowels		Long vowels		diphthongs	
ɪ	as in pit	i:	as in see	eɪ	as in day
e	as in wet	a:	as in arm	aɪ	as in my
æ	as in cat	ɔ:	as in saw	ɔɪ	as in boy
ʌ	as in run	u:	as in too	əʊ	as in low (UK)
ɒ	as in hot (UK)	ɜ:	as in her (UK)	oʊ	as in low (US)
ʊ	as in put	ɜːr	as in bird (US)	aʊ	as in how
ə	as in ago	ə˞	as in mother (US)	ɪə	as in near (UK)
i	as in cosy			eə	as in hair (UK)
u	as in influence			ʊə	as in pure (UK)
				aɪə	as in fire
				aʊə	as in sour

Consonant sounds

b	as in bee	n	as in nose	dʒ	as in general
d	as in do	p	as in pen	ŋ	as in hang
f	as in fat	r	as in red	ð	as in that
g	as in go	s	as in sun	θ	as in thin
h	as in hat	t	as in ten	ʃ	as in ship
j	as in yet	tʃ	as in better (US)	ʒ	as in measure
k	as in key	v	as in vat	tʃ	as in chin
l	as in led	w	as in wet		
m	as in map	z	as in zip		

Other symbols used in the pronunciations

- /ə/ this shows that the /ə/ as in **sudden** /'sʌdən/ can be pronounced or not pronounced
- /r/ this shows that the /r/ as in the word **teacher** /'ti:tʃə/ is pronounced in UK English when followed by a vowel sound, but not when followed by a consonant sound. In US English it is always pronounced.
- /'/ primary stress (the part of the word you emphasize most), as in **above** /ə'baʊv/
- /,/ secondary stress (the part of the word you emphasize as well as, but not quite as much as, the primary stress), as in **backyard** /'bæk'jɑ:d/
- /l/ this is used when a consonant (usually 'l') can be pronounced as a syllable on its own, as in the word **angle** /'æŋ.gəl/
- /~/ this is used when a vowel is pronounced with a nasal sound, usually because the word has come from French

if a symbol is shown in italics it means the sound can be pronounced or not pronounced (for example, the *t* in the pronunciation of the word **lunch** /lʌntʃ/)