

English Pronunciation: Weak Forms

Level B1 · Lesson 2

Name: _____

Date: _____

Score: _____ / 44

Language Focus: Strong and Weak Forms

Many common function words (to, for, and, of, can, was, from, than, at, some) have two pronunciations: a strong form (the full vowel sound) and a weak form (the vowel reduces to a quick /ə/ sound, called schwa).

Word	Strong form	Weak form	Example (weak, normal speech)
to	/tu:/	/tə/	I want to go.
for	/fɔ:/	/fə/	This is for you.
and	/ænd/	/ən/	fish and chips
of	/ɒv/	/əv/	a cup of tea
can	/kæn/	/kən/	I can swim.
was	/wɒz/	/wəz/	He was tired.

Rule: We normally use the weak form in everyday speech. We switch to the strong form when the word is stressed for emphasis or contrast, or when it comes at the end of a sentence or question.

See it in context

I want to leave now. (normal — weak form)

Who are you talking TO? (end of question — strong form)

Same word, two different sounds — it depends on where it sits in the sentence and whether it's emphasised.

Exercise 1: True or False (8 points)

1. In "I want to go now", "to" is in its weak form. True / False
2. In "Who are you talking to?", "to" is in its weak form. True / False
3. In "fish and chips", "and" is in its weak form. True / False
4. In "Yes, he WAS late", "was" is in its weak form. True / False
5. In "a cup of tea", "of" is in its weak form. True / False
6. In "What is this FOR?", "for" is in its weak form. True / False
7. In "I can swim", "can" is in its weak form. True / False
8. In "Yes, I CAN help", "can" is in its weak form. True / False

Exercise 2: Multiple Choice (8 points)

For each sentence, circle whether the underlined word is strong or weak.

1. "She's from Spain." a) Weak form b) Strong form
2. "Where are you from?" a) Weak form b) Strong form
3. "I'd like some coffee." a) Weak form b) Strong form
4. "I need SOME help, not none." a) Weak form b) Strong form
5. "He's bigger than me." a) Weak form b) Strong form
6. "It's bigger THAN I expected, not smaller." a) Weak form b) Strong form
7. "I was at the park." a) Weak form b) Strong form
8. "What at are you looking at?" a) Weak form b) Strong form

Exercise 3: Matching (8 points)

Say each sentence aloud. Write a or b to show the form of the underlined word.

a) Weak form b) Strong form

Sentence

1. the shop with my sister

2. Who did you go with?

3. I can help you.

4. Yes, I CAN help.

5. a piece of cake

6. What's it made of?

7. He was tired.

8. He WAS right, actually.

Form (a or b)

Exercise 4: Word Sort (12 points)

Write each sentence in the correct box.

- fish and chips
- a cup of tea
- I want to go
- he was late
- I can swim
- bigger than me
- Who are you talking TO?
- What is this FOR?
- Yes, he WAS late.
- I need SOME help.
- What are you looking AT?
- It's bigger THAN I expected.

Weak Form	Strong Form

Exercise 5: Gap Fill (8 points)

Write "weak" or "strong" to classify the underlined word.

1. "She works from home." — this is the _____ form.
2. "Where are you from?" — this is the _____ form.
3. "I'll wait for you." — this is the _____ form.
4. "Who is this for?" — this is the _____ form.
5. "He's older than her." — this is the _____ form.
6. "I like tea more THAN coffee, not less." — this is the _____ form.
7. "I need a book." — this is the _____ form.
8. "Give me A book, not the book." — this is the _____ form.

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Exercise 1: True or False — Answers

1. In "I want to go now", "to" is in its weak form. — True
2. In "Who are you talking to?", "to" is in its weak form. — False
3. In "fish and chips", "and" is in its weak form. — True
4. In "Yes, he WAS late", "was" is in its weak form. — False
5. In "a cup of tea", "of" is in its weak form. — True
6. In "What is this FOR?", "for" is in its weak form. — False
7. In "I can swim", "can" is in its weak form. — True
8. In "Yes, I CAN help", "can" is in its weak form. — False

Exercise 2: Multiple Choice — Answers

1. "She's from Spain." — correct answer: a) Weak form
2. "Where are you from?" — correct answer: b) Strong form
3. "I'd like some coffee." — correct answer: a) Weak form
4. "I need SOME help, not none." — correct answer: b) Strong form
5. "He's bigger than me." — correct answer: a) Weak form
6. "It's bigger THAN I expected, not smaller." — correct answer: b) Strong form
7. "I was at the park." — correct answer: a) Weak form
8. "What are you looking at?" — correct answer: b) Strong form

Exercise 3: Matching — Answers

the shop with my sister — a) Weak form

Who did you go with? — b) Strong form

I can help you. — a) Weak form

Yes, I CAN help. — b) Strong form

a piece of cake — a) Weak form

What's it made of? — b) Strong form

He was tired. — a) Weak form

He WAS right, actually. — b) Strong form

Exercise 4: Word Sort — Answers

Weak Form: fish and chips; a cup of tea; I want to go; he was late; I can swim; bigger than me

Strong Form: Who are you talking TO?; What is this FOR?; Yes, he WAS late.; I need SOME help.; What are you looking AT?; It's bigger THAN I expected.

Exercise 5: Gap Fill — Answers

1. She works from home. — Weak form

2. Where are you from? — Strong form

3. I'll wait for you. — Weak form

4. Who is this for? — Strong form

5. He's older than her. — Weak form

6. I like tea more THAN coffee, not less. — Strong form

7. I need a book. — Weak form

8. Give me A book, not the book. — Strong form