

Weak and Strong Forms:

1. The indefinite article: <a>/<an>

a) strong forms: /eɪ/ and /æn/

The strong form is used exclusively in the context of quotation and receives stress in this context:

You say [eɪ] before a consonant but [æn] before a vowel.

b) weak forms /ə/ and /ən/

The weak form is used elsewhere.

[ə] boy was bitten by [ən] alligator.

2. The conjunction <and>:

a) strong form: /ænd/

Used in the context of quotation, for emphasis and in impatient usually impolite answers where it receives stress and question-like intonation:

- I love you!
- [ænd]...??? (meaning: 'So what?!?!')
- Do you have anything apart from cosmetics in your purse?
- Hmmm...I've got cosmetics [ænd] cosmetics...

b) weak forms: 1) /ən/ or 2) /n/

1) is used in normal speech:

You will read this again [ən] again [ən] again until you remember it!

You use 2) in fast speech before a CONSONANT:

Dumb [n] dumber.

3. Comparative particle <as>:

a) strong form: /æz/

The strong form is used sentence finally and optionally between two unstressed syllables. It is stressed only in the former case:

Such [æz]?

I hate it when he uses her [æz] his cook and waitress!

b) **weak form:** /əz/

Weak forms are used elsewhere.

[əz] drunk [əz] a lord...

Hard [əz] I tried, I could not keep up with her.

4. **Prepositions: <at, of, for, from>**

a) **strong forms:** /æt, ɒv, fɔ:(r), frɒm/

Used sentence finally, for emphasis, quoting, and optionally between two unstressed syllables. In the first three contexts receive stress.

What are you staring [æt]?

b) **Weak forms:** /ət, ə(v), f(ə)(r), frəm,/

Used elsewhere.

I got it [frəm] my father [ɒn] my 10th birthday.

I'll stay [wɪð] you [fr] a week.

That is not my cup [ə] tea.

THE PREPOSITION LIKE <by, in, with, out, up etc.> THAT CONTAIN (AT LEAST) ETYMOLOGICALLY HIGH VOWELS DO NOT HAVE SEPARATE WEAK FORMS IN STANDARD BRITISH ENGLISH!!!!

<on> DOES NOT HAVE A WEAK FORM REDUCED TO SHWA!

5. **The verb 'to be' <be, am, are, is, was, were, been>:**

a) **strong forms:** /bi:, æm, ɑ:(r), ɪz, wɒz, wɜ:(r), bi:m/

Used sentence initially in questions, sentence finally, in question tags, for emphasis, quoting.

- [ɑ:] they playing our favourite song?
- Yes, they [ɑ:].

He isn't too eager to help you, [ɪz] he?

b) **weak forms:** /bi, (ə)m, ə(r), (ɪ)z, wəz, wə(r), bɪm/

Used in other positions, as an operator in wh-questions.

They [ər] in China and they [ə] coming back in January.

I've never [bɪn] to Ukraine.

6. The verb 'to have' <have, has, had>

a) strong forms: /hæv/, /hæz/ and /həd/

Used sentence finally, in question tags, sentence medially as a lexical verb (meaning 'to possess sth.')

- Have you seen his newest movie?
- Yes, I [hæv].

He [hæz] three flats in Manhattan and two in Hollywood.

I [hæv] to stay longer at work.

b) Weak forms: 1) /həv/ or 2) /əv/ or 3) /v/ and 1) /həz/ or 2) /əz/ or 3) /z/ and 1) /həd/ or 2) /əd/ or 3) /d/

Used as an auxiliary verb. 1) are used sentence initially or after a word ending in /ə/. 3) are used after a vowel and 2) are used elsewhere.

She[z] made a complaint against you.

John and Peter [əv] done something terrible.

[həd~həd] you been there before that day?

7. The verb <do, does>

a) strong forms: /du:/ and /dʌz/

Sentence finally, as a lexical verb.

- Yes, I am sure he [dʌz].
- We'll [du:] plenty of exercises!

b) weak forms: 1) /də/ 2) /dʊ/ and 1) /dəz/ or 3) /dz/

Used as an auxiliary verb 2) used before vowels, 3) in very fast speech

[dəz] he know what to do?

[dʊ] I look as if I was your twin brother?

8. Conjunction <but>

a) strong form: /bʌt/

Sentence finally, metaphorically meaning ‘doubts’

There are still some ifs and [bʌts].

I think you are right [bʌt]...

b) weak form: /bət/

Used elsewhere.

I could have tried to help her [bət] did not have knowledge enough to do that.

9. Modal verbs <must, can, could, shall, should, will, would >:

a) strong forms

VERB/FORMS	STRONG FORMS	WHERE USED:
Must	/mʌst/	Sentence initially, sentence finally, in question tags, in the meaning of logical assumption.
Can	/kæn/	Sentence initially, sentence finally and in question tags.
Could	/kʊd/	as above
Shall	/ʃæl/	as above
Should	/ʃʊd/	as above
Will	/wɪl/	as above
Would	/wʊd/	as above

IN NEGATIVE FORMS ALL AUXILIARY VERBS (ALL MODALS + NON-MODAL AUXILIARIES i.e. ALL MENTIONED IN 9 + DO, BE AND HAVE) RETAIN THEIR STRONG FORMS!

REMEMBER THAT SOME OF THE VOWELS IN CONTRACTED NEGATIVE FORMS ARE DIFFERENT FROM THOSE IN NON-NEGATED FORMS!!!

CONTRACTED NEGATIVE FORMS LOSE ‘T’ BEFORE A CONSONANT:

You [mʌsn] smoke here!

b) weak forms:

VERB/FORMS	WEAK FORMS	WHERE USED
Must	1) /məst/ or 2) /məs/	Elsewhere. 1) before vowels 2) before consonants
Can	/kən/	Elsewhere.
Could	/kəd/	as above
Shall	1) /ʃəl/ 2) /ʃl/ or /ʃ/	Elsewhere. 2) used before consonants
Should	/ʃəd/ or /ʃd/	Elsewhere.
Will	1) /wəl/ 2) /l/	As above. 2) used after a pronoun.
Would	/wəd/ or /əd/ or 3) /d/	Elsewhere. 3) after pronouns except for 'it'.

10. Pronouns in nominative <you, he, she, we>

a) strong forms: /ju:, hi:, ʃi:, wi:/

In emphatic contexts, sentence finally.

- So it was really [ju:]!?
- If [ʃi:] can't, nobody can!

b) weak forms: /ju, 1) hi or 2) i , ʃi, wi/

Elsewhere. 1) used sentence initially, 2) used elsewhere.

I bet [i] can't count to 8723680276350287436.

[ʃi] was so excited that [i] forgot to put on her clothes.

11. Pronouns in accusative <me, you, him, her, us, them>

a) strong forms /mi:, ju:, hɪm, hɜ:, əs, ðəm/

Emphatic context, quoting...

It is [hɜ:] to whom I wrote the letter....

b) weak forms: / mi, ju, (h)ɪm, (h)ə, (ə)s, ðəm /

Elsewhere, sentence initially only the forms with /h/ are attested. They are not stressed.

I hate [ɪm]!

12. Pronouns in genitive <your, his, her, their>

a) strong forms: /jɔ:(r), hɪz, hɜ:, ðeə(r)/

Sentence finally, for emphasis.

Is this car [hɪz]?

- b) **weak forms:** /jə(r), (h)ɪz , (h)ə/

Elsewhere. /h/-initial forms are used sentence initially and after shwa.

He was doing [ɪz] best not to disappoint her but she did not care.

<their> is not reduced to shwa!

13. Pronoun/subject filler <there>

- a) **strong form:** /ðeə(r)/

As a pronoun...

He has hidden it [ðeə].

- b) **weak forms:** /ðə(r)/

Elsewhere: as a subject position filler (dummy subject):

[ðə(r)] has been a terrible misunderstanding.

14. Modifier <some>:

- a) **strong form:** /sʌm/

before nouns, meaning an unidentified object/person, in the environment of weak syllables, sentence finally:

[sʌm] Mr Smith is waiting for you outside the building.

[sʌm] of them may be dangerous.

My mother made a delicious cheesecake, would you like to have [sʌm]?

- b) **weak form:** /səm/

Before mass nouns to mean an unidentified amount of sth. before a count nouns meaning several:

I found [səm] coins.

I need [səm] water.

15. Conjunction <or>:

- a) **strong forms:** /ɔː(r)/

Two /ɔː/ three people in the company speak French.

b) weak forms (only in fixed phrases) : /ə(r)/

More /ə/ less one big mess.

16. Pronoun <who>:

a) strong form (as an interrogative pronoun): /hu:/

/hu:/ is she?

Do you know /hu:/ she is?

b) weak form (relative pronoun): /u/

People /u/ are absent will have to make up for it.

17. Comparative particle <than>:

a) strong form (sentence finally, emphasis): /ðæn/

What is he bigger than?

b) weak form (elsewhere): /ðən/

I'm better [ðən] you.

18. Preposition/particle <to>

a) strong forms /tu:/: sentence finally

Where are you going [tu:]?

b) weak forms 1) /tə/ 2) /tu/

1) before consonants, 2) before vowels

I'm going [tə] Japan.

I want [tu] open a shop.

19. Demonstrative/ relative pronoun <that>

a) strong form /ðæt/: as a demonstrative pronoun

Why did you do [ðæt]?

b) weak form /ðət/: as a relative pronoun

I told you [ðət] I didn't like you.

20. Pronoun <any>

a) strong form /eni/: when emphasised, used sentence initially, sentence finally, in complex pronouns like anyone, anyhow, anything etc.

She was surprised because she did not expect anyone.

b) weak form /əni/: used elsewhere

I didn't expect you to do /əni/ better.