

Her mother opened the letter that was addressed to her father.

/hə 'mʌðər 'æʊpənd ðə 'letə ðæt wəz ə'drest tə hə 'fɑ:ðə/

- **weak forms:** A very important aspect of the dynamics of English pronunciation is that many very common words have not only a strong or full pronunciation (which is used when the word is said in isolation), but also one or more **weak forms** which are **used when the word occurs in certain contexts**. Words which have weak forms are, for the most part, **function words** such as **conjunctions** (e.g. 'and', 'but', 'or'), **articles** (e.g. 'a', 'an', 'the'), **pronouns** (e.g. 'she', 'he', 'her', 'him'), **prepositions** (e.g. 'for', 'to', 'at') and **some auxiliary and modal verbs** (e.g. 'do', 'must', 'should'). Generally the strong form of such words is used when the word is being quoted (e.g. the word 'and' is given its strong form in the sentence "We use the word 'and' to join clauses"), when it is being contrasted (e.g. 'for' in "There are arguments for and against") and when it is at the end of a sentence (e.g. 'from' in "Where did you get it from?"). Often the pronunciation of a weak-form word is so different from its strong form that if it were heard in isolation it would be impossible to recognise it: for example, 'and' can become /ŋ/ in 'us and them', 'fish and chips', and 'of' can become /f/ or /v/ in 'of course'. The reason for this is that to someone who knows the language well these words are usually highly predictable in their normal context.
- **"linking r":** there are many words in English (e.g. 'car', 'here', 'mother') which in a rhotic accent such as General American or Scots would be pronounced with a final /r/ but which in BBC pronunciation (= a non-rhotic accent) end in a vowel when they are pronounced before a pause or before a consonant (sound) (i.e. /kɑ:/, /hɪə/, /'mʌðə/). **When they are followed by a vowel (sound)**, BBC speakers pronounce /r/ at the end (e.g. 'mother opened' /'mʌðər 'æʊpənd/) – it is said that this is done to link the words without sliding the two vowels together.

The bananas were a peculiar colour but Debra ate them anyway.

/ðə bæ'nɑ:nəz wər ə pə'kju:lɪə 'kʌlə bət 'debrə 'eɪt ðəm 'eniweɪ/

- The word **'colour'** is NOT followed by a vowel (sound) in this sentence and the phoneme /r/ is, therefore, not pronounced at the end of the word.

Her new dietician was stricter than she expected and though she wasn't supposed to eat after seven, hunger got the better of her.

/hə 'nju: ,daɪə'tɪʃn wəz 'strɪktə ðən ʃɪ ɪk'spektɪd ən ðəʊ ʃɪ 'wɒzənt sə'pəʊzd tu 'i:t 'ɑ:ftə 'sevən / 'hʌŋgə 'gɒt ðə 'betər əv ə/

- **/i/ & /u/:** Notice the use of the non-phonemic symbols /i/ and /u/ in the weak forms /ʃɪ/ and /tu 'i:t/.
- **/,daɪə'tɪʃn/, 'wɒzənt/ & 'sevən/:** These words can be pronounced (and transcribed) either with a **schwa** (/ 'sevən/) or a **syllabic consonant** (/ 'sevŋ/).
- **Weak form(s) of 'her':** The weak form of the pronoun 'her' is typically /hə/. On rare occasions (such as in this example sentence), it can be reduced to /ə/ (e.g. 'better of her' / 'betər əv ə/). This form of **h-dropping** does NOT occur in every context and should be used with caution.
- The symbol / can be used instead of punctuation marks (e.g. instead of the comma in '...seven, hunger...' / 'sevən / 'hʌŋgə/).