**Strong and Weak Syllables**

One of the most noticeable features of English pronunciation is that some of its syllables are **strong** while many others are **weak**

What do we mean by "strong" and "weak"? When we compare weak syllables with strong syllables, we find the vowel in a weak syllable tends to be

**shorter, of lower intensity (loudness) and different in quality**.

For example

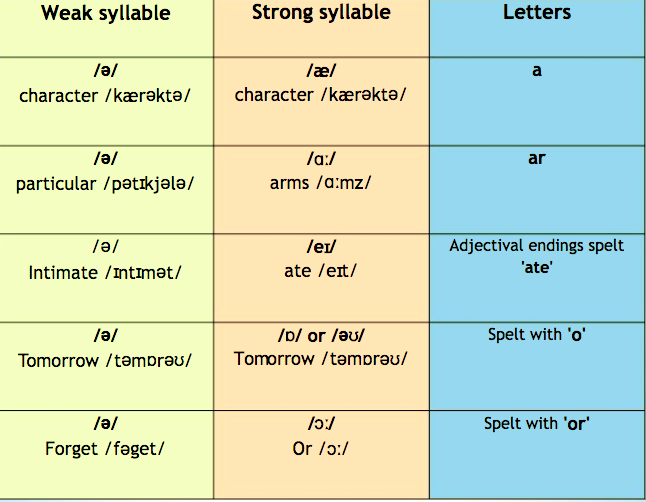
'data' delta the second syllable, which is weak, is shorter than the first, is less loud and has a vowel that cannot occur in strong syllables.

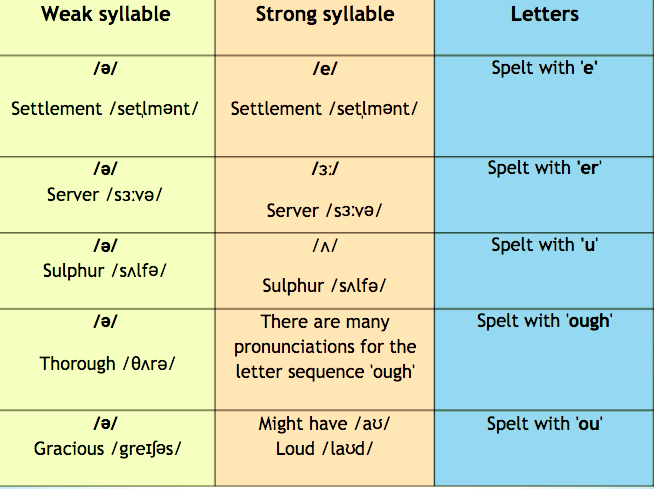
In a word like 'bottle' the weak second syllable contains no vowel at all, but consists entirely of the consonant . We call this a **syllabic consonant.**

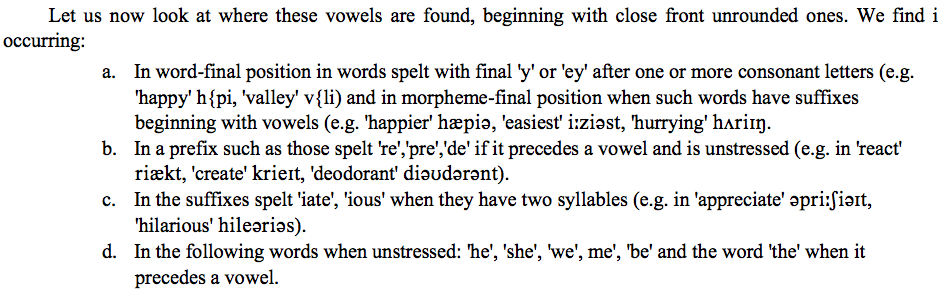
|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Strong | Weak |
| strong syllables are stressed  strong syllable will have as its peak one of the vowel phonemes (or possibly a triphthong) but not a, i, u  If the vowel is one of then the strong syllable will always have a coda as well. | Weak syllables are unstressed  At the end of a word, we may have a weak syllable ending with a vowel (i.e. with no coda):  the vowel ("schwa");   a close front unrounded vowel in the general area of , , symbolised i;  a close back rounded vowel in the general area of , , symbolised u. |

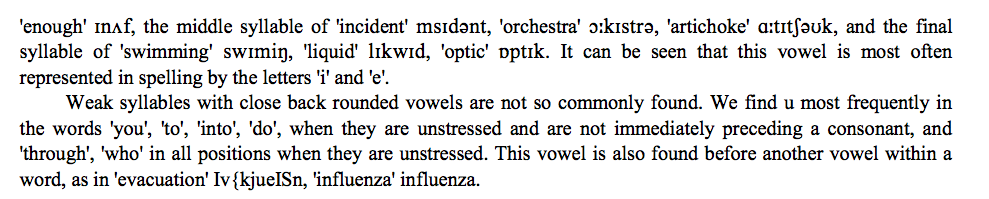
**2.The vowel ‘schwa’ a. features."**

* The most frequently occurring vowel in English is a
* In quality it is mid (i.e. halfway between close and open) and central (i.e. halfway between front and back). It is generally described as lax



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**Syllabic Consonants:**

We must also consider syllables in which no vowel is found.

In this case, a consonant, either l, r or a nasal, stands as the peak of the syllable instead of the vowel, and we count these as weak syllables like the vowel .

Where do we find syllabic l in the BBC accent?

It is useful to look at the spelling as a guide. The most obvious case is where we have a word ending with one or more consonant letters followed by 'le' (or, in the case of noun plurals or third person singular verb forms, 'les'). Examples are:

