



Help with Pronunciation Unit 9 and 10

The schwa and the unstressed /ɪ/

The weak vowels /ə/ and /ɪ/

In every word of two syllables or more, one of the syllables is unstressed. In these unstressed syllables speakers of English often use the sounds /ə/ and /ɪ/. The sound /ə/ is the only symbol in phonetics with a name and it is called a 'schwa'. This is because it is almost not a sound but rather a relaxed very short outward breath. Find the target sounds by looking up the words 'controller' for the /ə/ sound and 'manage' for the /ɪ/ sound in your Macmillan Pronunciation Dictionary and repeat the words after playing them, paying special attention to the underlined syllable or listening to your teacher model the sounds.

You have encountered many words in which these sounds occur before Unit 10.

Task 1

Consider the following aviation words for the /ə/ sound

Weak A	private	compass	mainten <u>ance</u>
Weak E	passenger <u>e</u>	incident	
Weak O	pilot	vector	pro <u>ceed</u>
Weak U	temper <u>ature</u>	su <u>pp</u> ort	

(NB: In many accents the final 'r' is not pronounced so that 'pasta' rhymes with 'faster'.)

Say these words out loud paying special attention to the unstressed syllables and the sound /ə/. Check your answers by listening to the Macmillan Pronunciation Dictionary or your teacher modelling the words.

Task 2

Consider the following aviation words for the /ɪ/ sound

Weak A	bagga <u>ge</u>		
Weak E	re <u>s</u> ult	heate <u>d</u>	de <u>t</u> ection
Weak I	hold <u>i</u> ng	geograph <u>i</u> c	naviga <u>t</u> e
Weak U	min <u>u</u> te		

Say these words out loud paying special attention to the unstressed syllables and the sound /ɪ/. Check your answers by listening to the Macmillan Pronunciation Dictionary or your teacher modelling the words.

Task 3

Put the words in the correct column of the table. When you have finished listen to them in the Macmillan Pronunciation Dictionary and check your answers.

beacon	error	instrument	obstacle	authority	technology
transponder	system	terrain	data	limit	
purchase	develop	develop	detector	abort	
	descent	luggage	procedure		

Unstressed syllable = /ə/	Unstressed syllable = /ɪ/

Task 4

Often whole words are pronounced as weak forms. E.g. top of the clouds, flight was delayed, vectors to DIXY. In the following pilot/controller dialogue from Unit 10, underline all the stressed syllables and words: /ə/ in red and /ɪ/ in blue.

C:	Polar 69. Roger. Report turning final, runway 29. Wind 320 at 10 kts.
PNF:	Report turning final, runway 29. Wind 320 at 10 kts.
PF:	Number one doesn't sound good. We're not running short of fuel, are we? We should have plenty of fuel.
PNF:	We've got fuel...but fuel flow should be much higher. Torque pressure is meant to be at 100, not 40

Check your answers against the recording or with your teacher.