

## PRONUNCIATION

### American English

This dictionary shows pronunciations used by speakers of the most common American English dialects. Sometimes more than one pronunciation is shown. For example, many Americans say the first vowel in *data* as /eɪ/, while many others say this vowel as /æ/. We show *data* as /deɪtə, dæɪtə/. This means that both pronunciations are possible and are commonly used by educated speakers. We have not, however, shown all American dialects and all possible pronunciations. For example, news is shown only as /nuːz/ even though a few Americans might pronounce this word as /nyuz/. The vowels /ɔ/ and /ɑ/ are both shown, but many speakers do not use the sound /ɑ/. These speakers say /ɑ/ in place of /ɔ/, so that *caught* and *cord* are both said as /kɔːt/.

### Use of hyphen

When more than one pronunciation is given for a word, we usually show only the part of the pronunciation that is different from the first pronunciation, replacing the parts that are the same with a hyphen: *economics* /ɛkəˈnɒmɪks, -ɪ/. The hyphen is also used for showing the division between syllables when this might not be clear: *boyish* /bɔɪ-ɪʃ/, *drawing* /dɪə-ɪŋ/, *clockwise* /kloʊk-waɪz/.

### Symbols

The symbols used in this dictionary are based on the symbols of the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) with a few changes. The symbol /y/, which is closer to English spelling than the /i/ used in the IPA, is used for the first sound in *you* /yʊ/. Other changes are described in the paragraph **American English Sounds**.

### Foreign words

English pronunciations have been shown for foreign words, even though some speakers may use a pronunciation closer to that of the original language.

### Abbreviations

No pronunciations are shown for most abbreviations. This is either because they are not spoken (and are defined as "written abbreviations"), or because they are pronounced by saying the names of the letters, with main stress on the last letter and secondary stress on the first: **VCR** /vi si tuː/. Pronunciations have been shown where an abbreviation is spoken like an ordinary word: **RAM** /ræm/.

### Words that are forms of main words

A form of a main word that is a different part of speech may come at the end of the entry for that word. If the related word is pronounced by saying the main word and adding an ending (see list on page 930), no separate pronunciation is given. If the addition of the ending causes a change in the pronunciation of the main word, the pronunciation for the related word is given. For example:

**impossible** /ɪmˈpɒsəbəl/, **impossibility** /ɪmˈpɒsəbɪləti/. There are some pronunciation changes that we do not show at these entries, because they follow regular patterns: (1) When an *-ly* or *-er* ending is added to a main word ending in /-bəl/, /-kəl/, /-pəl/, /-gəl/, or /-dəl/, the /ə/ is usually omitted. For example, **practical** is shown as /ˈpræktɪkəl/. When *-ly* is added to it, it becomes **practically** /ˈpræktɪkəli/. This difference is not shown. (2) When *-ly* or *-ity* is added to words ending in *-y* /i/, the /i/ becomes /ə/: **angry** /æŋɡri/ becomes **angrily** /æŋɡrɪli/. This is not shown.

### Stress

In English words of two or more syllables, at least one syllable is said with more force than the others. The sign / / is put before the syllable with the most force. We say it has *main stress*: **person** /ˈpɜːnsn/, **percent** /pɜːˈsent/. Some words also have a stress on another syllable that is less strong than the main

stress. We call this *secondary stress*, and the sign // is placed before such a syllable: **personality** /ˈpɜːsnəliːti/. **personify** /pɜːˈsɒnəˈfaɪ/. Secondary stress is not usually shown in the second syllable of a two-syllable word, unless it is necessary to show that the second syllable must not be shortened, as in **starlit** /ˈstɑːrliːt/ compared to **startlet** /ˈstɑːrliːt/.

### Unstressed Vowels

/ə/ and /ɪ/ Many unstressed syllables in American English are pronounced with a very short unclear vowel. This vowel is shown as /ə/ or /ɪ/; however, there is very little difference between them in normal connected speech. For example, the word *affect* /əˈfekt/ and *effect* /ɪˈfekt/ usually sound the same. The word *rabbit* is shown as /ˈræbɪt/, but it may also be pronounced /ˈræbət/.

/ə/ and /ɪ/ These sounds are very similar. The symbol /ə/ is used in unstressed syllables, and /ɪ/ which is longer, is used in stressed and secondary stressed syllables. When people speak more quickly, secondary stressed syllables become unstressed so that /ə/ may be pronounced as /ə/. For example, *difficult* /dɪfɪkəl/ and *coconut* /ˈkɒknʊt/ may be pronounced as /dɪfɪkət/ and /ˈkɒknʊtət/. Only the pronunciation with /ə/ is shown.

**Compound Words with a Space or Hyphen** Many compounds are written with either a space or a hyphen between the parts. When all parts of the compound appear in the dictionary as separate main words, the full pronunciation of the compound is not shown. Only its stress pattern is given. Each syllable is represented by a dot /·/. and the stress marks are put before the dots that represent the syllables with stress. For example: **bus stop** /·ˈsɒp ·ˈstɒp/.

**Stress Shift** Sometimes a compound contains a main word with an ending. If the main word is in the dictionary and the ending is a common one, only a stress pattern is shown. For example: **washing machine** /·ˈwɒʃɪŋ ·ˈmɪʃɪn/.

**Washing** is not a main word in the Dictionary, but **wash** is; so only a stress pattern is shown because *-ing* is a common ending. But if any part is not a main word, the full pronunciation is given: **helter-skelter** /ˈhelɪtəˌskeltə/.

### Stress Shift

A number of compounds may have a shift in stress when they are used before some nouns. For example, the compound *plate glass* would have the pattern /·ˈplæt ·ˈglɑːs/ when spoken by itself or in a sentence like *The window was made of plate glass*. But the phrase *plate glass window* would usually have the pattern /·ˈplæt ·ˈglɑːs ·ˈwɪndəʊ/. The mark /·/ shows this. For example: **plate glass** /·ˈplæt ·ˈglɑːs/. Stress shift can also happen with some single words: **artificial** /ˈɑːtɪʃɪəl/; **independent** /ˌɪndɪˈpendənt/.

### Syllabic Consonants

The sounds /n/ and /l/ can be syllabic. That is, they can themselves form a syllable, especially when they are at the end of a word (and follow particular consonants, especially /t/ and /d/). For example, in **sudden** /ˈsʌdn/ the /n/ is syllabic; there is no vowel between the /d/ and the /n/, so no vowel is shown. In the middle of a word, a hyphen or stress mark after /n/ or /l/ shows that it is syllabic: **botanist** /ˈbɒtənɪst/ and **catalog** /ˈkætəlɒg/ are three-syllable words.

The sound /r/ can be either a consonant, /r/, or a vowel, /ə/. When /ə/ is followed by an unstressed vowel, /ə/ may be pronounced as a sequence of two vowels, /ə/ plus the following vowel, or as /ə/ followed by a syllable beginning with /r/. For example, the word *coloring* may be pronounced as /ˈkɒlərɪŋ/ instead of /ˈkɒlərɪŋ/. Only the pronunciation, /ˈkɒlərɪŋ/, is shown.

## PRONUNCIATION TABLE

### VOWELS

Symbol	Key Word
i	beat, feed
ɪ	bit, did
eɪ	date, paid
ɛ	bet, bed
æ	bat, bad
ɑ	box, odd, father
ɒ	bought, dog
oʊ	boat, road
ʊ	book, good
u	boot, food, student
ʌ	but, mud, mother
ə	banana, among
ə	shirt, murder
aɪ	bite, cry, buy, eye
aʊ	about, how
ɔɪ	voice, boy
ɪ	beer
ɛɪ	bare
ɑɪ	bar
ɔɪ	door
ʊɪ	tour

### CONSONANTS

Symbol	Key Word
p	pack, happy
b	back, rubber
t	tie
d	die
k	came, key, quick
g	game, guest
tʃ	church, nature, watch
dʒ	judge, general, major
f	fan, photograph
v	van
θ	thing, breath
ð	then, breathe
s	sip, city, psychology
z	zip, please, goes
ʃ	ship, machine, station, special, discussion
ʒ	measure, vision
h	hot, who
m	men, some
n	sun, know, pneumonia
ŋ	sung, ringing
w	wet, white
l	light, long
r	right, wrong
y	yes, use, music
ʔ	butter, bottle
t̚	button

### American English Sounds

/ɪ/, /ɛɪ/, /ə/, /t/, /d/, /d/, /d/, and /nɪ/ like a short period of silence. The glottal stop usually occurs before a syllabic /n/ or a consonant that begins the next syllable. /t/ and /d/ These symbols mean that these consonants may either be pronounced or left out. For example, the *t* in *restless* /ˈrestləs/ and the *d* in *grandfather* /ˈɡrændˌfɑːðə/ are usually dropped in normal connected speech, even though it is considered more correct in slow careful speech to pronounce the *t* and *d* in these words. /nɪ/ Many speakers pronounce the sequence /nɪ/ as /ntɪ/. For example, **attention** /əˈtɛnʃən/ **conscious** /ˈkɒnʃəs/ may also be pronounced as /əˈtɛntʃən/ and /ˈkɒntʃəs/. Only the pronunciation with /nɪ/ is shown.

The /v/ in *tap* or *sat* is a voiceless sound. Many Americans, however, use a voiced sound like a quick /d/ for the *t* in words like *later*, *party*, and *little*. The *t* in these words, shown in this Dictionary as /t/, sounds like the *d* in *ladder*, *hardy*, and *middle*. This sound usually occurs between vowels (especially, before an unstressed vowel), between *r* and a vowel, or before a syllabic /l/. This symbol means that many speakers pronounce a glottal stop in place of or together with /t/. A glottal stop is the sound in the middle of the expression *uh oh*. For example, in the words **button** /ˈbʌtən/ and **football** /ˈfʊtbɔːl/, the *t* does not sound the same as in the word *ton* /tɒn/; it sounds more