

Prepositions – Strong vs Weak forms

The strong forms of the prepositions 'to', 'of', 'from', 'at' and 'for' use strong vowel sounds, however the weak forms use the schwa sound and are much shorter in speech.

Strong

A preposition is used in the strong form when it is used at the end of a question, or used as emphasis. For example:

a) At the end of a question:

- Who are you staring **at** ?
- What did you do that **for** ?
- Where are you going **to** ?
- What is that made **of** ?
- Where are you **from** ?

b) As emphasis:

- I don't work **with** you, I work **for** you.
- Throw it **to** me, not **at** me.
- The present is **from** Anna, not **for** her.

Weak

The weak form (schwa) is used in all other situations. In the following examples, the prepositions use the schwa sound.

- My train arrives *at* 8pm.
- I bought a gift *for* my uncle.
- I'm not going *to* work today.
- He is one *of* a kind.
- He'll be arriving *from* Paris.

Exercise. Say the following sentences, using the appropriate weak or strong forms of the prepositions. Underline the strong forms of the prepositions.

1. That castle is called the Tower of London.
2. What's the time? It's twenty to seven.
3. Who's the letter from? It's from my aunt in Australia.
4. Who is for, and who is against?
5. Who is the letter for? It's for me.
6. I'll be there at 9pm.
7. Where you at, man?
8. Who are you talking to?