

The 'Schwa' Sound: ə

The '**schwa**' sound is the most common sound in British English. It is often found in articles ('a', 'the') and prepositions ('to', 'for', 'of'). Any vowel or vowel combination can be pronounced as a *schwa*. If you want to speak British English like a native, then you must master the *schwa* sound. The *schwa* sound helps natives to speak very quickly.

In Portuguese, the sound is called "**xevá**" or "**vogal central média**".

See: https://pt.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vogal_central_m%C3%A9dia

Here are some examples of the *schwa* sound. Listen to your teacher say these words, and repeat.

teacher

banana

balloon

tomorrow

common

difficult

doctor

theater

summer

natural

survive

people

Consider these two words: man postman

In the word 'man', the letter 'a' is spoken as a short 'a'. However, in the word 'postman', the letter 'a' is pronounced as a *schwa*.

Now watch these videos for more information:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wg0P0oYkniE> (4 mins)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KwDJnXt3ZVQ> (3 mins)