

What on earth is a schwa?

The easiest way to find out is to say the following words out loud: *pedal, garden, artist, pilot, circus, vinyl*. Without even realising it, you have just used the schwa sound six times for the vowels *a, e, i, o, u* and *y*. Say them again to see and hear how the schwa comes on the unstressed part of each word.

The pronunciation symbol for the schwa is easy to remember because it's an upside-down e that looks like this: ə.

You'll also discover that the schwa is the sound used for a great many vowel pairs, such as *ai* in *mountain* and *or* in *doctor*. Open your dictionary at random, and there they'll be. Grab ə friend ənd go hunting for thəm.

See more amazing information about the schwa at the end of this book.

You ə now ready to discovə more əbout thə wonderful schwa.

schwa a

elephant

giant

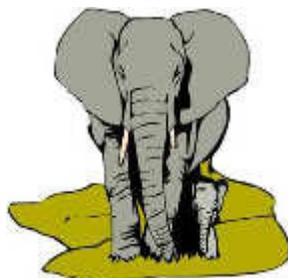
petals

Brisbane

capital

cottage

primary



elephant



giant



petals



Brisbane



cottage



primary school

The African elephant has larger ears than the Indian variety. How about that!

I'm afraid I need to leave the giant alone for a while so that I can talk to the media about his amazingly bad acting.

Not long ago I came across a flower with huge petals.

Brisbane is an important capital city in tropical Australia.

The husband and wife agreed to purchase a comfortable cottage a short distance away from us.

A thousand children have used our primary school library!

schwa e

basket

blanket

golden

garden

dessert

television

comedy



basket



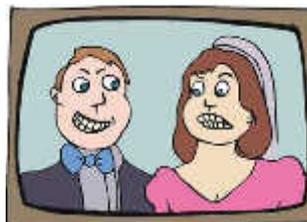
blanket



golden garden



dessert



comedy television

I'll take the lunch basket and yellow blanket to our picnic spot in the forest.

The field has dozens of magnificent golden sunflowers growing beside the * old bakery. The local scenery is enjoyed by lots of men, women and children.

In a moment we'll have the pie I've prepared for dessert. (I must remember to prepare the cream.)

Every single Wednesday we watch a comedy on television.

* The word *the* is pronounced as *thee* when it precedes a word beginning with a vowel. Hear the difference when you say the phrase, *the old and the new.* (*thee old and the new*)

schwa ai

mountain

curtain

bargain

portrait

Britain

captain

fountain



mounten



curten



portret



Briten



capten



founten

Are you absolutely *cert*ain we are going to climb to the peak of the highest mount*ai*n?

I bought this curt*ai*n at the barg*ai*n shop - and I'd better close the window before any vill*ai*ns break in!

I'm really pleased with the portr*ai*t you painted!

Have you ever been to Great Brit*ai*n?

I'd like to be the capt*ai*n of a great big ship!

The fount*ai*ns in Rome made me feel cool in the hot weather.

schwa **or**

doctor**or**

mirror**or**

sailor**or**

anchorage**or**

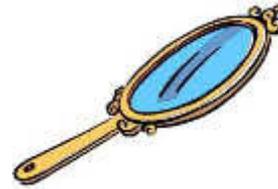
author**or**

error**or**

cursor**or**



doctor (dɒktə)



mirror (mɪrə)



sailor (saɪlə) anchorage (ˈæŋkərɪdʒ)



author (ˈɔːθə)



error (ɪrə)



cursor (kɜːsə)

The doctor**or** checked my medical chart to see if I could go home.

I love this antique mirror**or**!

The sailor**or** in the ship's rigging yelled out that he'd found a safe anchorage**or** at last.

I decided to put my favourite author**ors** together on the same shelf of my bookcase.

'Making an error**or** can be the best way to learn!' said the tennis coach sagely. (i.e. wisely)

Sometimes I lose the cursor**or** on my computer and have to hunt around for it with my mouse.