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Dictionary and pronunciation guide

****Understanding Pronunciation Symbols in Oxford Dictionaries**** This guide will help you learn how to read and pronounce words using symbols from the Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary and the Oxford Learner's Dictionary of Academic English. ****Consonants**** The guide introduces 24 consonant sounds, including /p/, /b/, /t/, /d/, /k/, /g/, and others. Some consonants have specific rules, such as British pronunciation dropping the /r/ sound unless followed by a vowel in the next word (e.g., "far" becomes "fah"). ****Vowels and Diphthongs**** The guide explains 14 vowel sounds, including short vowels like /ɪ/ (sit) and long vowels like /i:/ (see). It also covers diphthongs, such as /eɪ/ (say). ****Variations in British and American English**** Some words have different pronunciations between British and American English. For example, the word "father" is pronounced with a longer vowel sound /fɑːðə(r)/ in British English but with a shorter vowel sound /fæðə(r)/ in American English. ****Phonetic Transcription**** The guide explains how to read phonetic transcriptions between slashes (e.g., /laɪk 'ðɪs/). These transcriptions represent the sounds and features that distinguish one word from another, using a phonemic system based on the International Phonetic Alphabet. ****Variant Pronunciations**** Some words have variant pronunciations, such as British English having a different vowel sound (/ɑ/) than American English (/ɔ:/ or /ɑ:/). The guide provides only one pronunciation for each word. ****Special Cases**** Finally, the guide notes that some variant pronunciations are represented by special uses of /i/ and /u/ (without a length mark), such as representing weak vowels. Can be sounded either as /i:/ or /i/ or a compromise between them The sequence /iə/ can be pronounced /jə/ so union can be /juːniən/ or /juːnjən/ In the same way /u/ represents a weak vowel between /u:/ and /ʊ/ If followed by a consonant sound it can be pronounced as /ə/ and the sequence /uə/ can be pronounced /wə/ as in actual /æktʃʊəl 'æktʃwəl/ Further information about a pronunciation may be given in square brackets ['laɪk 'ðɪs] referring more specifically to sounds on the IPA chart This narrow transcription is useful for representing pronunciations or sounds that are not British or American for example the East African pronunciation ['boma] given at boma Allophones can be demonstrated by looking at the /t/ phoneme In addition to [t] the /t/ phoneme also contains tap [ɾ] and glottal stop [ʔ] sounds which are used in certain contexts The [ɾ] tap sound is very much like the /d/ in rider It is widely used by American speakers when the /t/ is between two vowels and the second vowel is not stressed as in writer Both British and American speakers sometimes use the glottal stop [ʔ] a momentary tight closure of the vocal cords for the /t/ in words like football /'fʊtbɔːl/ and button /'bʌtn/ Use of the glottal stop for /t/ in these positions is more common and more widely accepted than its use between vowels as in water Such considerations are not limited to the /t/ phoneme For example the /l/ phoneme encompasses a clear [ɫ] sound for words such as like /laɪk/ where the /l/ is before or between vowels and a dark [ɫ] sound for other positions as in full /fʊl/ or milk /mɪlk/ The sound files that accompany our phonemic transcriptions are intended to supplement the phonemic transcriptions and demonstrate such detail The sounds /l/ and /r/ can often be syllabic — that is they can form a syllable by themselves They can be thought of as representing a sequence of [a] or [an] There is a syllabic /l/ at the end of final /'faɪnl/ but for clarity the schwa /ə/ is shown in the transcription of finally /'faɪnəl/ so that it is not confused with finely /'faɪnl/ Some pronunciations are labelled as strong or weak forms The first pronunciation given usually represents the one most commonly used but where a strong form is indicated it should be used when the word is stressed A strong form is also usually used when the word is at the end of a sentence For example Can /kən/ you help I'll help if I can /kæn/ Stress is very important in English — it can be used to distinguish the meaning of similar-sounding words compounds phrasal verbs and idioms The stress patterns indicated in our dictionaries will enable the learner to sound natural and clearly communicate their intended meaning The mark / / shows the main stress — compare able /'eɪbl/ stressed on the first syllable and ability /ə'bɪləti/ stressed on the second A stressed syllable is relatively loud long in duration said clearly and distinctly made noticeable by the pitch of the voice A stressed syllable does not usually contain the weak vowels /ə/ ****Understanding Stress and Pronunciation**** When writing out words, stress marks (/) indicate which syllable has the main emphasis. In longer words, secondary stresses may occur before the main stress. These are marked with / /. The feel of these secondary stresses is like beats in a rhythm leading up to the main stress. ****Pronunciation Guides**** The Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary provides guidance on how to pronounce unfamiliar words. YourDictionary offers both written pronunciation guides and audio clips to help learners understand word pronunciations. The dictionary uses symbols from authoritative sources, including Webster's New World College Dictionary and the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA). ****Learning Pronunciation**** HowToPronounce.com is a free online resource that helps anyone learn how to pronounce words correctly in various languages. The website offers audio pronunciations by native speakers, as well as multilingual pronunciation guides. ****American Pronunciations**** The Oxford Advanced American Dictionary provides American pronunciations for all its entries. When more than one written pronunciation is given for a word, they are both acceptable, but the first form listed is the most common. Not all possible American pronunciations are shown in this dictionary, so that they pronounce both caught and cot as /kɑt/, the apostrophe shows the strong stress in a word or group of words. It is in front of the part (or syllable) that you say most strongly. For example, any /'eni/ has a stress on the first syllable; depend /dɪ'pend/ has a stress on the second syllable. the apostrophe shows a weaker (or secondary) stress. Many longer words have a syllable that is pronounced with a secondary stress as well as a syllable with strong (or main) stress. So in the word pronunciation /prɑːnɑːnsi'eɪʃən/, the main stress is on the syllable /'eɪ/, and the secondary stress is on the syllable /,nɑːn/. American speakers use the sound / ʃ /, which is like a quick /d/, in many words spelled with -t- or -tt-. It is used in words after a vowel or /r/, and before an unstressed vowel or syllabic /l/: city /'sɪti /; parting /'pɑːtɪŋ /; little /'lɪtl / . The sounds / l / and / n / can often be "syllabic" - that is, they can form a syllable by themselves with an extremely reduced vowel. This is shown by the symbols /l/ and /n/, for example in the words botany /'bɒtəni/ and finalist /'faɪnlɪst/. Strong and Weak Forms Some very common words, for example an, for, of, and that, have two or more pronunciations: a strong form and one or more weak forms. For example, for is pronounced /fɔːr/ in the sentence It's for you. The strong form occurs when the word comes at the end of a sentence or when it is given special emphasis. For example, for is pronounced /fər/ in Who's it for? and The present isn't from Anna, it's for her.

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