

Weak and Strong Syllables

1. The **strong syllable** is one whose peak is : a short vowel except /ə/ and sometimes /ɪ/, a long vowel, a diphthong, or a triphthong. Strong syllables can be stressed or unstressed.
e.g. obscure , silly, include , power ,
2. The **weak syllable** is one whose peak is:
 - a) /ə/ : about, fashion , carrot
 - b) sometimes /ɪ/ : easy , happy , busy
 - c) A syllabic consonant /l, n, r/ : one of these consonants can be the peak of a syllable.
Notice that the peak, here, is not a vowel; it is a consonant called the syllabic consonant.
 - /l/ : the form –le when it occurs in final position after a consonant as in: tackle, ba.ttle, ca.stle
 - /n/ : it is the form –en when it occurs after a fricative or an alveolar plosive in final position: se.ven , o.ften , ta.ken
 - /r/ : It occurs in final position and it is more common in American accent than in RP. E.g. cen.tre, mar.ker

Weak syllables are never stressed.

Exercise : Find the weak syllable in what follows.

Thicken , history , sudden , trouble, Christian, eaten, oral, panel, money, broken