

Weak and Strong Syllables

1. The nucleus with a **strong syllable** is : a short vowel except /ə/ and sometimes /ɪ/, a long vowel, a diphthong, a triphthong. Strong syllables can be stressed or unstressed.

e.g. obscure , silly, include , power ,

2. The nucleus with a **weak syllable** 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.

- /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

Exercise : Find the weak syllable in what follows.

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