

Universidad de Los Andes  
Facultad de Humanidades y Educación  
Escuela de Idiomas Modernos

## THE RP ENGLISH VOWELS<sup>1</sup>

/i:/

**PART & HEIGHT OF TONGUE:** the FRONT the tongue is raised slightly below and behind the CLOSE (or HIGH) FRONT position.

**SIDE RIMS OF TONGUE:** close contact with upper molars.

**SHAPE OF LIPS:** spread.

**TONGUE TENSENESS:** tense.

**RESTRICTIONS OF OCCURRENCE:** never in syllable closed by /ŋ/.

**Vowel length examples:**

**Fully long [i:]:** be, bee, me, plea, sea, see, tea, three (final position/open syllable).  
feed, leave, need, peas, seed, seen (before voiced C).

**Shortened [ɪ]:** beat, beef, leaf, peace, piece, reach (before voiceless C).

Compare and practice [i:]-[ɪ]:

bead - beat    seize - cease    leave - leaf  
liege - leach    Eden - eaten    league - leak

**MOST COMMON SPELLINGS:**

**ee:** bee, canteen, cheese, deed, fees, keen, meet, need, seen

**e :** be, complete, Pete, theme, these

**ea:** bead, cease, eat, leaf, meat, reach, reason, sea, tea

**ie:** field, piece

**ei:** caffeine, protein, seize, Sheila

**i :** Argentina, casino, fatigue, litre, machine, magazine, police, prestige, ski, unique, visa,  
expertise

**EXCEPTIONAL SPELLINGS:**

Beauchamp [ˈbi:tʃəm]; geyser (= water spring) [ˈɡaɪzər], BrE (= water heater) [ˈɡi:zə]; key [kʰi:];  
quay [kʰi:]; people [ˈpʰi:pəl]; Phoebe [ˈfi:bɪ], precis AmE [ˈpɹɛ:si:] BrE [ˈpɹɛ:si:]; debris or débris  
AmE [dəˈbri:] or [ˈdeɪbri:] BrE [ˈdeɪbri:].

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<sup>1</sup> This study sheet was prepared by Prof. Ingrid Goilo de Tyrode. It has been slightly modified for the purposes of this class.

**/ɪ/**

**PART & HEIGHT OF TONGUE:** a part of the tongue nearer to CENTRAL than to FRONT is raised just above the HALF-CLOSE (or CLOSE-MID) position.

**SIDE RIMS OF TONGUE:** light contact with upper molars.

**SHAPE OF LIPS:** loosely spread.

**TONGUE TENSENESS:** lax

**RESTRICTIONS OF OCCURRENCE:** none

**Vowel length examples:**

**Lengthened [ɪː]:** weak forms of be, he, me, she; busy, Friday, Monday, Sunday, Saturday, Tuesday, holiday (final position/open syllable) bid, middle, orange, pig, ridge (before voiced C).

**Short [ɪ]:** bitch, fit, it, list, rich, ship, sit, wick (before voiceless C).

Compare and practice [r] - [ɪ]:

bid - bit nib - nip pig - pick ridge - rich  
big - bick kid - kit lid - lit Ms - Miss

**MOST COMMON SPELLINGS:**

**i:** bid, bit, city, image, it, rich, ship, silly, village

**y:** body, city, cyst, happy, pretty, rhythm, silly, telly

**e:** (in unaccented syllables) except, careless, houses

**e:** (accented) ONLY in: England, English, pretty

**-ed:** /-ɪd/ (past tense after /t,d/) painted, needed

**-ed:** /-ɪd/ (adjectives) aged, beloved, learned, sacred

**-edly:** /-ɪdli/ (adverbs) fixedly, markedly, supposedly

**ie:** buries, hippie, ladies, movies, studies, yuppie

**-ey:** abbey, donkey, money, monkey, Geoffrey

**a:** (unstressed) character, orange, spinach

**-aCe:** (especially -age) baggage, imagage, languagage, luggagage, postagage, villagage, preface, surface, private

**EXCEPTIONAL SPELLINGS:**

build [bɪɪd], busy [ˈbɪzɪ], business [ˈbɪznɪs], biscuit [ˈbɪskɪt], circuit [ˈsɜːrkɪt], committee [kəˈmɪtɪ] or [kəˈmɪtɪ], lettuce [ˈlɛtɪs] or [ˈlɛtɪs] (also [ˈlɛrəs]), (days of the week) Monuday [ˈmʌndɪ] (also [ˈmʌndeɪ]), minute [ˈmɪnɪt], womun [ˈwɪmɪn].

/e/

**PART & HEIGHT OF TONGUE:** the FRONT of the tongue is raised between the HALF-CLOSE and the HALF-OPEN (or OPEN-MID) positions.

**SIDE RIMS OF TONGUE:** light contact with upper molars.

**SHAPE OF LIPS:** loosely spread.

**TONGUE TENSENESS:** lax, but with more tension than for /ɪ/.

**RESTRICTIONS OF OCCURRENCE:** never in stressed open syllables.

**Vowel length examples:**

**Lengthened [eː]:** bed, dead, led, men, said, says, Ted (before voiced C).

**Short [e]:** bet, deaf, debt, left, mess, met, net, set (before voiceless C).

**MOST COMMON SPELLINGS:**

**e:** bed, bet, led, let, net, pen, set, ten

**ea:** bread, dead, deaf, head, lead (= heavy metal)

**a:** any, many, necessarily, Thames

**EXCEPTIONAL SPELLINGS:**

ate BrE [et] or [eɪt] AmE [eɪt], bury ['bɛrɪ], burial ['bɛrɪəl], friend [fɹend], Geoffrey ['dʒɛfɪ],  
jeopardize ['dʒɛpərədaɪz], leisure BrE ['leɪzə] AmE ['liːzər], Leicester ['lestər] Leonard ['lenərd],  
leopard ['lepərd], lieutenant BrE [lɛftˈhɛnənt] AmE [luːtˈhɛnənt], Reynolds ['renɪdz], said [sed],  
says [sez].

Compare and practice words with / i: - ɪ - e /:

bead	bid	bed
beat	bit	bet
bean	bin	Ben
cheek	chick	cheque
deed	did	dead
eat	it	ate
heel	hill	hell
lead	lid	led
peel	pill	pell
Pete	pit	pet

**/æ/**

**PART & HEIGHT OF TONGUE:** the FRONT of the tongue is raised just below the HALF-OPEN position.

**SIDE RIMS OF TONGUE:** very light contact with back upper molars.

**SHAPE OF LIPS:** neutrally open.

**TONGUE TENSENESS:** lax, but with more tension than for /e/.

**PHARYNX:** constricted.

**RESTRICTIONS OF OCCURRENCE:** never in stressed open syllables.

**Vowel length examples:**

**Lengthened [æː]:** ad, bad, bag, badge, cab, mad, sad (before voiced C).

**Short [æ]:** at, bat, back, batch, cap, mat, sat, mass (before voiceless C).

**MOST COMMON SPELLINGS:**

**a:** bag, back, cab, cap, dad, lad, mad, pad, rat, sad, that

**EXCEPTIONAL SPELLINGS:**

**a'a:** ma'am (=madam) [mæm]

**ai:** plaid [plæɪd], plait [plæɪt]

**i** (in words of French origin): impasse [æm'pʰɑ:s], lingerie ['lænzəri], meringue [mə'ræŋ]

Compare and practice / e - æ /:

bed - bad    bet - bat    beg - bag    met - mat

led - lad    less - lass    net - gnat    said - sad

Read aloud the following transcribed sentences and then write them in normal English spelling:

1. ['wɪtʃ\_əv ðə 'sɪks 'θɪn 'wɪmɪn\_ɪz\_ə 'wɪkɪd \ 'wɪtʃ]

2. [ə 'bɪg /pʰɪg || ə 'lɪtʃ /kʰɪtʃ]

3. ['fɪ\_ən 'tʃɪps\_ə 'tʃɪ:p\_ənd\_ 'i:zɪ tu\_ 'ɪt]

4. [ə 'fæt 'mæn 'klæpɪŋ\_ɪz\_ 'hændz]

5. ['æn 'hæz 'plæts\_ən 'blæk \s\_læks]

/ʌ/

**PART & HEIGHT OF TONGUE:** the CENTRE of the tongue is raised just above the fully OPEN position.

**SIDE RIMS OF TONGUE:** no contact with upper molars.

**SHAPE OF LIPS:** neutrally open.

**TONGUE TENSENESS:** lax.

**JAWS:** considerably open.

**RESTRICTIONS OF OCCURRENCE:** never in stressed open syllables.

**Vowel length examples:**

**Lengthened [ʌː]:** above, bud, cud, does, fun, love, mud (before voiced C).

**Short [ʌ]:** but, cut, enough, luck, rough, tough, must (before voiceless C).

**MOST COMMON SPELLINGS:**

**u:** bud, bun, cud, cut, dull, fun, luck, much, run, rut, sun

**o:** (generally before nasals and /v/) above, among, another, become, borough BrE [ˈbʊərəʊ] (AmE [ˈbɜːrəʊ]), brother, come, company, cover, done, dozen, front, glove, govern, honey, love, London, Monday, money, monkey, month, mother, none, nothing, one, once, onion, other, oven, some, son, sponge, stomach, thorough BrE [ˈθərəʊ] (AmE [ˈθɜːrəʊ]), ton, tongue, won, wonder, color, worry BrE [ˈwʌri] (AmE [ˈwɜːri]), wonderful

**ou:** country, couple, courage BrE [ˈkʰʌrɪdʒ] (AmE [ˈkʰɜːrɪdʒ]), cousin, double, Douglas, enough, flourish BrE [ˈflʌrɪʃ] (AmE [ˈflɜːrɪʃ]), nourish BrE [ˈnʌrɪʃ] (AmE [ˈnɜːrɪʃ]), rough, southern, touch, tough, trouble, young

**oo:** blood, flood

**EXCEPTIONAL SPELLINGS:** does [dʊəz], twopence [ˈtʰwɒpəns].

Read aloud the sentences transcribed below and then write them in normal English spelling:

1. [ˈtʃʌk ˈlʌvz ɪz ˈmʌðər ən ˈbrʌðər ˈveri ˈmʌtʃ || ˈdʌznt i:]

2. [ˈdʌgləs ˈmʌst əv ˈwʌn ə ˈlɒt əv ˈmʌni ɪn ˈlʌndən]

**/ɑː/**

**PART & HEIGHT OF TONGUE:** a part of the tongue between CENTRE and BACK, in the fully OPEN position.

**SIDE RIMS OF TONGUE:** no contact with upper molars.

**SHAPE OF LIPS:** neutrally open.

**TONGUE TENSENESS:** tense.

**JAWS:** considerably separated.

**RESTRICTIONS OF OCCURRENCE:** never in syllable closed by /ŋ/.

**Vowel length examples:**

**Fully long [ɑː]:** bar, car, far, mar, par, star, tar (final position/open syllable).  
arm, bard, calm, card, farm, hard, large (before voiced C).

**Shortened [ɑ]:** arch, Bart, last, lark, part, raft (before voiceless C).

Compare and practice [ɑː]-[ɑ]:

bard - Bart    card - cart    carve - calf  
hard - heart    large - larch    parse - pass

**MOST COMMON SPELLINGS:**

**ar:** (in AmE, generally before 'r') art, cart, carve, hard, large, march, parse, part, tart

**a:** (especially in BrE, generally before nasals and /f, s, θ/) advantage, after, answer, ask,  
banana, basket, bath, branch, broadcast, camouflage, can't, cast, castle, chance, class,  
command, dance, demand, disaster, draft, drama, example, fast, fasten, father,  
forecast, France, gasp, glance, glass, grant, grasp, grass, half, master, nasty, pass, past,  
path, plant, raft, rather, sample, shan't, staff, task, tomato, vase

**au:** (BrE) aunt, draught, laugh

**er:** (esp. BrE) Berkeley, clerk, Derby, sergeant

**oir:** (in French borrowings) bourgeois, repertoire, reservoir

**EXCEPTIONAL SPELLINGS:** bazaar, heart, hearth.

**/ɒ/**

**PART & HEIGHT OF TONGUE:** a part of the tongue somewhat advanced from true BACK is raised just above the OPEN position.

**SIDE RIMS OF TONGUE:** no contact with upper molars.

**SHAPE OF LIPS:** slightly rounded.

**TONGUE TENSENESS:** lax.

**JAWS:** quite open.

**RESTRICTIONS OF OCCURRENCE:** never in stressed open syllables.

**Vowel length examples:**

**Lengthened [ɒ]:** cod, dog, don, gone, pong, tongs (before voiced C).

**Short [ɒ]:** cot, dock, dot, got, knot, pot, rock, spot (before voiceless C).

**MOST COMMON SPELLINGS:**

**o:** (esp. in BrE)<sup>2</sup> clooth, cood, coot, doog, doock, doot, goone, goot, roock, soorry

**ou:** (esp. in BrE) couough, Glououcester, trouough

**au:** (esp. in AmE) Auaustin, Auaustria, Auaustralia, becaause, lauaurel, sauausage

**a:** (esp. in BrE) quaality, swaan, waant, waas, waatch, whaat, yaacht

**EXCEPTIONAL SPELLINGS:** knowoledge, bureaocracy

Compare /ɒ/ - /ɑ:/:

cod - card   cot - cart   cough - calf   don - darn  
impossible - impassable   lost - last   tot - tart  
lodge - large   Roger - Rajah   shock - shark

Read:

1. [d̥ʊæt 'pʰɒt 'kʰɒst 'mɔ: ðən ði\_ 'ɔ:stɪən \kʰɒt]
2. [rɒdʒə 'lɒst ðə 'klɒk d̥ʊæt 'dɒn \geɪɪ hɪm]
3. [tʰɒm fə'gɒt tə 'wɒtʃ d̥ʊə 'pɹɛʊgrəm\_ə'baʊt \fɪŋgz]
4. [ɪts 'nɒt\_ɪm'pʰɒsəb̩l̩ tə\_ 'stɒp\_ \sməʊkɪŋ]

<sup>2</sup> In AmE, these words are generally pronounced with [ɑ].

**/ɔ:/**

**PART & HEIGHT OF TONGUE:** an almost fully BACK part of the tongue is raised between the HALF-CLOSE and the HALF-OPEN positions.

**SIDE RIMS OF TONGUE:** no contact with upper molars.

**SHAPE OF LIPS:** quite strongly rounded.

**TONGUE TENSENESS:** tense.

**RESTRICTIONS OF OCCURRENCE:** never in syllable closed by /ŋ/.

**Vowel length examples:**

**Fully long [ɔ:]**: bore, core, door, lore, more, tore (final position/open syllable).  
board, born, cause, cord, corn, lord (before voiced C).

**Shortened [ɔʹ]**: chalk, horse, ought, short, sport, talk (before voiceless C).

Compare [ɔ:] - [ɔʹ]

board - bought saw - sort saws - sauce war - wart

**MOST COMMON SPELLINGS:**

**or**: born, cord, cork, horse, or, port, short, storm, sword

**ore**: before, bore, core, lore, more, ore, score, shore, tore

**oor**: door, floor

**oar**: boar, board, coarse, hoarse, oar

**ou**: (esp. in BrE) bought, fought, ought, sought, thought

**our**: course, court, four

**a**: (esp. in BrE) all, always, bald, fall, mall, quart, salt, talk, wall, walk, war, warm, warn,  
water (usually before 'l' and 'r').<sup>3</sup>

**au**: audience, cause, daughter, fault, Paul, Paula, sauce

**aw**: awkward, dawn, hawk, jaw, law, lawn, pawn, saw, yawn

**EXCEPTIONAL SPELLINGS:** (esp. in BrE) abroad, awe, broad, Sean [[ʃɔ:n], sure.

Compare /ɒ/ - /ɔ:/:

cock - cork cod - cord cot - caught don - dawn

fox - forks pot - port spot - sport spots - sports

Transcribe and practice reading the following dialogue:

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<sup>3</sup> In AmE, these words are generally pronounced with [ɒ].



### SPORTS REPORT FROM CHANNEL 4

**Announcer:** This morning the Roarers Football team arrived back from New York.

Paul Short is our sports reporter, and he was at the airport.

**Paul Short:** Good morning. This is Paul Short. All the footballers are walking towards me. Here's George Ball, the goalkeeper. Good morning, George.

**George Ball:** Good morning. Are you a reporter?

**Paul Short:** Yes. I'm from Channel 4. Please tell our audience about the football match with York.

**George Ball:** Well, it was awful. We lost. And the score was four to forty-four. But it wasn't my fault.

**Paul Short:** Whose fault was it?

**George Ball:** The forwards.

**Paul Short:** The forwards?

**George Ball:** Yes. The forwards. They were always falling down or losing the ball.

**/ʊ/**

**PART & HEIGHT OF TONGUE:** a part of the tongue nearer to CENTRE than to BACK is raised just above the HALF-CLOSE position.

**SIDE RIMS OF TONGUE:** no contact with upper molars.

**SHAPE OF LIPS:** closely but loosely rounded.

**TONGUE TENSENESS:** lax.

**RESTRICTIONS OF OCCURRENCE:** almost never in word-initial position; never before /ŋ/; never in stressed open syllable; word-finally, only in unstressed open syllables as in 'to' /tʊ/.

**Vowel length examples:**

**Lengthened [ʊ]:** bull, could, full, hood, pull, should (before voiced C).

**Short [ʊ]:** book, foot, hook, look, put, shook, took (before voiceless C).

**MOST COMMON SPELLINGS:**

**u:** (in accented syllables, in some 30 words, generally before /l/) bull, bullet, bulletin, bully, bush, butcher, cushion, full, fulfill, pull, push, pussy, put

**oo:** (mainly in) book, brook, cook, cookie, foot, good, hood, hook, look, nook, rook, shook, soot, stood, took, wood, wool, boor, poor

**ou:** bouquet, could, courier, should, would

**o:** bosom, wolf, woman, Worcester ['wɔstər], worsted ['wɔstɪd]

Compare /ʊ/ - /ɔ:/:

bull - ball    could - cord    put - port    wood - ward

Compare /ʊ/ - /ʊ/:

books - box    cook - cock    good - god    look - lock    put - pot    rook - rock

**/u:/**

**PART & HEIGHT OF TONGUE:** the BACK of the tongue is raised slightly below and advanced from the CLOSE BACK position.

**SIDE RIMS OF TONGUE:** no firm contact with upper molars.

**SHAPE OF LIPS:** closely rounded.

**TONGUE TENSENESS:** tense.

**RESTRICTIONS OF OCCURRENCE:** never in syllable closed by /ŋ/.

**Vowel length examples:**

**Fully long [u:]:** blue, do, few, hue, new, shoe, two (final position/open syllable).  
food, June, move, lose, prove, rude (before voiced C).

**Shortened [ʊ]:** boot, douche, fruit, group, hoof, hoop (before voiceless C).

Compare [u:]-[ʊ]

Jews - juice lose - loose nude - newt rude - root

prove - proof shoe - shoot use(v.) - use(n.)

**MOST COMMON SPELLINGS:**

**eu:** (esp. in AmE; in BrE /ju:/) neurotic, neutral, pneumonia, rheumatism, sleuth

**ew:** chew, (pronounced /ju:/) few, new, news, newt, pew, pewter, skew

**o:** do, tomb, two, who, whom, womb

**oe:** canoe, shoe

**oCe:** improve, lose, move, prove, whose

**oo:** boot, cool, food, loose, moon, pool, shoot, soon, spoon

**ou:** group, soup, through, wound (n.), youth

**u:** brute, dune, Hugh, June, rude, Susan

**ue:** blue, Sue

**ui:** juice, suit

**EXCEPTIONAL SPELLINGS:** *eau:* (/ju:/) beauty, beautiful.

**NOTE:** In many cases, the spellings **eu**, **ew**, **u**, **ue**, **ui** are pronounced /ju:/ (esp. in BrE); e.g., duke, few, hue, music, neuter, new, news, nuisance, etc. However, in some words, both /u:/ and /ju:/ are heard; e.g., enthusiasm, suit.

Compare /ʊ/ - /u:/:

full - fool fullish - foolish foot - food look - Luke wood - wooed

Practice reading aloud the following phrases. Then write them in normal orthographic form.

1. [ðə 'kʰʊk 'lʊks\_ət\_ɜ: \kʊkəri ,bʊk || fɪ 'pʰʊts 'fʊgər\_ɪn ðə \pʰʊdɪŋ || ðə 'pʰʊdɪŋ 'lʊks \gʊd]

2. ['lʊk\_ət 'lu:k 'pʰʊdɪŋ ə 'pʰʊə 'fu:l\_ʌt\_əv ðə 'pʰu:l\_ɪn ðə \wʊd]

3. [ðɪs 'fu:lɪf 'bʊkɪf 'dju:k || ɪz 'tʰu: 'fʊt tə 'mu:v\_ə \fʊt]

**/ɜ:/**

**PART & HEIGHT OF TONGUE:** the CENTRE of the tongue is raised between the HALF-CLOSE and the HALF-OPEN positions (perhaps a bit more toward the open-mid position).

**SIDE RIMS OF TONGUE:** no firm contact with upper molars.

**SHAPE OF LIPS:** neutrally spread.

**TONGUE TENSENESS:** lax.

**RESTRICTIONS OF OCCURRENCE:** never in syllable closed by /ŋ/.

**Vowel length examples:**

- Fully long** [ɜ:]: cur, fur, her, purr, sir, stir (in final position/open syllable).  
bird, earl, girl, heard, herd, scourge, word (before voiced C).  
**Shortened** [ɜʻ]: church, earth, first, lurk, purse, worse (before voiceless C).

Compare [ɜ:]-[ɜʻ]:

curd - curt heard - hurt purrs - purse serve - surf  
surge - search Thursday - thirsty

**MOST COMMON SPELLINGS:**

**ear:** earl, early, earth, heard, pearl  
**er:** her, herd, jersey, serpent, serve; err  
**ir:** bird, first, fir, firl, shirt, sir, skirt, thirsty  
**or:** (preceded by `w') word, work, world, worm, worse, worst, worth, worthy  
**our:** bourbon, courtesy, journal, journey, scourge  
**ur:** burn, church, hurl, hurt, purse, turn; purr  
**yr:** Byrne, myrtle, myhrr

**EXCEPTIONAL SPELLING:** colonel [k<sup>h</sup>ɜ:rnɫ].

Compare /ɔ:/ - /ɜ:/:

born - burn four - fur Paul - pearl torn - turn  
warm - worm ward - word walker - worker

Compare /e/ - /ɜ:/:

bed - bird Ben - burn head - heard kennel - colonel west - worst

Compare /ʌ/ - /ɜ:/:

bud - bird bug - berg gull - girl hut - hurt  
but - Bert bun - burn cud - curd shut - shirt

Read the following text aloud. Then write the phonetic symbol(s) for each of the vowel sound(s) present in each word.

### **MOTORCYCLISTS - Knights or Blights of the Road?**

How do you feel about motorcycles? Are you thrilled? Or do you hate them with a passion? Perhaps you are somewhere in between; you simply tolerate them.

I know that those who are thrilled hold them in their estimation as something very special. It may be their sound -the throaty rumble of an English twin or single, the high-pitched howl of a Japanese multi-two-stroke, the purr of a big multicylinder four-stroke, or again it might be just a small popping set on which to get to work. It could even be the sense of freedom one gets with the wind in the face.

Whatever the attraction, these people tell me that they really enjoy their motorcycles. To feel that almost-living machine beneath you, to know it will answer to your every whim or direction, to lean into the curves and to know it will carry you to your destination reliably. Through the “black as your hat” night the engine keeps punching its way through the Miles, headlamp piercing into the darkness. Arriving exhilarated you might sit in front of the fire, there drinking hot coffee, talking to a friend who had accompanied you on his machine, discussing the virtues of motorcycles -the advantages or disadvantages of singles, twins, multi-V twins, flat twins, flat fours, shaft drives, chains, self or kick starters.

/ə/

**PART & HEIGHT OF TONGUE:** the CENTRE of the tongue is

- a) raised between the HALF-CLOSE and HALF-OPEN positions in word non-final positions, as in *alone, fatigue*;
- b) slightly more raised toward the HALF-CLOSE position and retracted in the vicinity of the velar consonants /k, g, ŋ/, as in *long ago*;
- c) raised either just below the HALF-OPEN position or between the HALF-OPEN and OPEN positions in word-final positions, as in *china, mother, over, sofa*.

**SIDE RIMS OF TONGUE:** no contact with upper molars.

**SHAPE OF LIPS:** neutrally spread.

**TONGUE TENSENESS:** lax.

**RESTRICTIONS OF OCCURRENCE:** never in accented syllables.

**MOST COMMON SPELLINGS:** Schwa can be represented by

- a) Any of the five vowel letters (and y) when they are in unaccented syllables. Examples: ago [ə'gəʊ], canal [kə'næɪ], hundred ['hʌndrəd], gentlemen ['dʒentlmən], possible ['pɒsəbəl], atom ['æɪəm] or ['ætəm], seldom ['seldəm], suppose [sə'pəʊz], suspect (v.) [sə'spekt], analysis [ə'næləsis].
- b) Combinations of vowel letters. Examples: camouflage [kə'mæʊflɑ:ʒ], parliament ['pɑ:rləmənt], region ['ri:dʒən], surgeon ['sɜ:rdʒən], tortoise ['tɔ:ɪrəs] or ['tɔ:rtəs], famous ['feɪməs], vengeance ['vɛndʒəns], villain ['vɪləɪn].
- c) Some vowel letter(s) + 'r' (esp. in BrE) Examples: liar ['laɪə], particular [pə'tɪkjələ], mother ['mʌðə], perfection [pə'fekʃn], forget [fə'get], razor ['reɪzə], colour ['kʌlə], figure ['fɪgə], surprise [sə'praɪz].
- d) The spelling *-re* (esp. in BrE), as in centre ['sentə], litre ['lɪtə].

**READING PRACTICE:** Read aloud the story below. Please underline the letters which stand for the sound /ə/.

Barbara spent Saturday afternoon looking at a beautiful book about South America. 'I want to go to South America', she said to herself. The next morning, when Barbara woke up it was six o'clock, and her brothers and sisters were still asleep. Barbara looked at them and closed her eyes again. Then she quietly got out of bed and started to pack her suitcase. She took some comfortable clothes out of the cupboard. She packed a pair of binoculars and her sister's camera. She packed a photograph of herself and one of her mother and father. 'I mustn't forget to have some breakfast', she said to herself. But then she looked at the clock. It was a quarter to seven. 'I'll just drink a glass of water', she said.