

Top 30 British Surnames Names and IPA Lesson One

Mistakes are shown in red.

1	Smith	/smɪθ/	metal worker
2	Jones	/dʒəʊnz/	favoured by God
3	Taylor	/'teɪ.lə/	tailor makes clothes
4	Williams	/'wɪl.jəmz/	helmet (Germanic)
5	Brown	/braʊn/	brown hair or skin
6	Davies	/'deɪ.vɪs/	son of David 'beloved'
7	Evans	/'e.vənz/	son of Evan (Welsh)
8	Wilson	/wɪl.sən/	Will's son
9	Thomas	/'tɒ.məs/	disciple of Christ
10	Roberts	/'rɒ.bəts/	bright renown
11	Johnson	/'dʒɒn.sən/	son of John (Swedish)
12	Lewis	/'lu:.ɪs/	fame and war
13	Walker	/wɔ:kəl/	forest inspector
14	Robinson	/'rɒ.'bɪn.sən/	son of Robert
15	Wood	/wʊd/	lives in/by the wood
16	Thomson	/'tɒm.sən/	disciple of Christ (Scottish)
17	White	/waɪt/	fair skin
18	Watson	/'wɒt.sən/	son of Walter
19	Jackson	/'dʒæk.sən/	son of Jack
20	Wright	/'raɪt/	wood worker
21	Green	/'gri:n/	lives by the green
22	Harris	/'hæ.rɪs/	'Henry' (French)
23	Cooper	/'ku:.pəl/	maker of wooden

			utensils e.g. barrels
24	King	/kɪŋ/	leader
25	Lee	/li:/	from the meadow or forest clearing
26	Martin	/ˈmɑː.tɪn/	of Mars / Martian
27	Clarke	/kla:k/	clerk
28	James	/dʒæɪmz/ /dʒeɪmz/	Biblical name of 'Jacob'
29	Morgan	/ˈmɔː.gən/	sea defender (Gaelic)
30	Hughes	/hju:z/	fire (Celtic)

IPA Lesson 1

The schwa sound - The schwa is the most common sound in the English language. It is the sound of an unstressed syllable in a word.

There is no letter that represents the schwa in the English alphabet. This is one of the main reasons why it is often not possible to know how to correctly pronounce words in English from the written word alone.

To make sure you learn new words with the correct pronunciation, it is very helpful to check words that have more than one syllable in the dictionary to check if a schwa is present.

In IPA phonemic transcription (the special writing that spells words of a language exactly the way they sound) the schwa sound looks like a backwards and upside down letter 'e'.

The schwa sound IPA phoneme looks like this → ə

How the schwa actually sounds changes depending on the word.

1. Taylor /ˈteɪ.lə/ →
schwa is spelt with the letter 'o' but sounds more like the letter 'a' or a high letter 'u'.
2. Williams /ˈwɪl.jəmz/ →
schwa is spelt with the letters 'ia' but sounds more like a low letter 'u'.
3. Wilson /ˈwɪl.sən/ →
Schwa is spelt with the letter 'o' but sounds more like the letter 'a' or closer to 'e'

The Cheat's Way to Recognise the Schwa!!!

Although the sound of the schwa sound does change slightly depending on the word and the spelling, there is an effective cheat for pronouncing every schwa. To make this sound scratch your head as if you are confused and say 'uh'.

Note: the schwa sound does not have rising question intonation but otherwise it sounds like 'uh'.

IPA Exercises for Self Study

I recommend printing this document or writing in an exercise book to do the following exercises (approx 5 minutes of study)

1. Go through the list of surnames in the table on page one and two and highlight all of the surnames which include the schwa sound. Hint: Remember to look for the backwards and upside down 'e' character like this → **ə**
2. Watch the video again and listen again to how I pronounce the names that include the schwa sound. Does my pronunciation of these words surprise you in any way? Before you knew about the schwa sound, how would you read these words if you were reading them for the first time?
3. Pronounce for yourself all the surnames in the table that include the schwa sound.
4. Look at the list of surnames again. Do you notice any patterns about where to find a schwa sound in surnames? If you think you have an answer to this - leave a comment on my blog!

Want to Learn a British Accent? Jade Joddle recommends **Learn a British Accent Fast**

<http://jadejoddle.com/british-accent-fast/>