Strong and weak forms 1: Pronouns

Some words have two different pronunciations – a strong form and a weak form. Normally we use the weak form, but if the word is stressed because it is especially important, or because we want to show a contrast, we use the strong form. Most pronouns have strong and weak forms.

### Table: Pronoun Forms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>weak</th>
<th>strong</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>you</td>
<td>/jʊ/</td>
<td>/ju:/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>me</td>
<td>/mi/</td>
<td>/mi:/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>he</td>
<td>/h/</td>
<td>/hɪ:/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>she</td>
<td>/ʃ/</td>
<td>/ʃi:/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>him</td>
<td>/ɪm/</td>
<td>/ɪm/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>her</td>
<td>/ɜ:</td>
<td>/ɜ:/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>we</td>
<td>/wi/</td>
<td>/wi:/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>us</td>
<td>/əs/</td>
<td>/əs/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>them</td>
<td>/ðem/</td>
<td>/ðem/</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* The r at the end of her is pronounced before a vowel (see Unit 22).

Give her _a_ chance.

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Listen to the difference, and repeat.

**A:** Will you be at the meeting on Friday? (you is weak)
**B:** Yes. Will you be there? (you is strong)

*Can you help me carry this suitcase? (me is weak)*

Hey, wait for me! (me is strong)

**A:** Is he there? (he is weak)
**B:** Who?
**A:** The boss.
**B:** No. Everybody else is working, but he’s gone home! (he is strong)

**A:** She doesn’t smoke or drink! (she is strong)
**B:** Ah, that’s what she told you! (she is weak)

**A:** Look – it’s him! (him is strong)
**B:** Where? I can’t see him. (him is weak)

**A:** Do you know that woman?
**B:** Her? No, I don’t recognise her. (first her is strong, second her is weak)

**A:** I’m afraid we can’t stay any longer. (we is weak)
**B:** What do you mean, ‘we’? I’ve got plenty of time. (we is strong)

**A:** They told us to go this way. (us is weak)
**B:** Well, they didn’t tell us! (us is strong)

When I said, ‘Give them a drink’ I didn’t mean them, I meant the people. (first them is weak, second them is strong)
Exercises

37.1 Listen and mark the underlined words w (weak) or s (strong).

1 A: Are you going to talk to him? B: No, I think he should talk to me first.
2 A: Shall I phone her? B: Yes, I think you should.
3 A: You see those people over there? Do you know them? B: I know her, but I don’t know him.
4 A: What are you going to give him? B: I think I’ll give him a shirt. What about you?
5 Let him come in and ask him what he wants.
6 She says she’ll bring her money tomorrow.
7 I’m tired … shall we go now?
8 Everybody’s leaving. What about us? Shall we go, too?
9 Tell us when you’re ready.
10 A: Who broke that window? B: He did! C: No, I didn’t, she did!

Check with the Key. Then listen again and repeat.

37.2 Listen and complete the sentences.

EXAMPLE: What did she say?

1 What …………… think about it?
2 Where …………… tonight?
3 …………… ready …………… now.
4 Where ……………?
5 …………… come in.
6 …………… feeling all right?
7 Tell …………….
8 I …………… phone number but not …………….

Check with the Key. Then listen again and repeat.

37.3 Listen and repeat this poem. Be careful to speak with the correct rhythm. Stress the words in bold, and use weak forms of the pronouns between them.

Comings and goings

Don’t
What did she say?
Send her away
Give her a chance
Ask her to dance
Give us a drink
What do you think?
Ask them to wait
Tell them it’s late
What shall we do?

Shall we wait here for you?
Please don’t delay

Tell me, what do you say?