

FUMC ESL 9-9-2019 Advanced Lesson

Pronouncing the "schwa" sound. This is the most common vowel sound in English. It's easy to make. Open your mouth slightly and make a sound. You probably made a noise that sounds like "uh". Every vowel can make this sound depending on where it is in the word. Try these examples. Listen for the "uh" sound the bold letter makes.

ago	soda	e ffect	o ccur	u pon	open
partial	denim	station	universal	poisonous	garage
word	s earch	f irst	w orm	v erb	e arn

We also use this word when there are no vowels there at all. For example, in the word "prism" you say an up between the S and M. PRI - SUM. But there is no vowel there. Pronounce these words, listening for the "schwa" sound.

prism	socialism	nationalism	couldn't	doesn't
isn't	hasn't	wasn't	didn't	shouldn't

The sequence "le" at the end of a word is usually pronounced with the "schwa" sound plus L.

able	capable	suitable	valuable	invisible	vegetable
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And of course, the word "a" and "the" are pronounced with the "schwa" sound. We say: a book, a cat, the dog, the earth.

Practice these sentences, listening for the schwa sound.

I heard her journey was worth the worry.

The sugar was the color of earth.

The early bird gets the worm.

FUNNY SOUNDING WORDS

The words in bold text below have been pointed out as some of the funniest sounding words in English. **Students:** Take turns reading these paragraphs and leading a discussion. Define the word in bold and answer the questions.

1. I slept so hard last night I woke up in a pile of **drool**.

What is drool? What does it mean to "sleep hard"? Is there such a thing as "sleep soft"?

2. I felt depressed all day by the low clouds and constant **drizzle**.

What is drizzle? What does it mean to feel depressed? Do you feel depression at times? Does cloudy weather make you feel depressed? What do you do when you feel depressed?

An economic depression is different than the emotional state of feeling depression. An economic depression means the economy is doing poorly. Jobs are lost, wages are flat or declining, there is a downturn in economic activity. A recession is a minor depression and lasts for a shorter period.

3. New neighbors just moved in next door and they have a dog that **yaps** all night. It keeps us awake. Should I talk to them about it or get a noise cancelling device? Make the sound a

yappy dog makes. A **yappy** dog can be very annoying. Do you have problems with yappy dogs in your neighborhood?

4. The soldiers made off with their **booty** before the officers could stop them. What is booty? Another word for this is **loot**, another funny sounding word. In the sixties in the US there were race riots often accompanied by **looting**.

"**Shake your booty**" is a line used in pop songs. It doesn't refer to ill-gotten gains. What does it refer to? How do you shake your booty? And by the way, what is an ill-gotten gain?

5. I got a **whiff** of perfume and knew my girlfriend was approaching. What is a **whiff**? Are you able to recognize your spouse by their smell?

Whiff can also be used as a verb meaning to hit at something and miss, as in golf. EX: I was trying to impress my boss who is a great golfer. I swung hard at the ball and **whiffed**. Talk about total humiliation!

6. When I'm on the phone I always **doodle** on whatever piece of paper is handy. Demonstrate **doodling**. Are you a **doodler**? What little habits do you have while talking on the phone?

7. I suppose I'm a **fuddy-duddy**, but I just don't like to see young women wearing very short shorts to the grocery store. Guess what a fuddy-duddy is. Do you have any opinions that might make people think you are a **fuddy-duddy**?

8. My one year old loves to talk, but most of what comes out of his mouth is **gibberish**. Sometimes our president speaks **gibberish**. What he says doesn't make sense. He doesn't think before he speaks. Do you often speak before you think, or do you carefully consider the impact of your words before speaking?

9. That was a **doozy** of a storm last night, wasn't it? We had several limbs blown down and our neighbors had a lightning strike that knocked out their power. Have you ever experienced a **doozy** of a storm?

10. During the Civil War, surgeons frequently **severed** the soldiers injured arms or legs. **Sever** means cut off. You can physically sever a body part or you can sever connections with a person you are in relationship with. What are some reasons you might sever connections with someone?

A word that is close in spelling, but not meaning is the word "**severe**". If you develop severe complications after surgery you have very serious complications.