20 schwa words with pictures

Each word has a lazy vowel that just says **"uh"**. The lazy letter is **purple and underlined**. The dot shows where the word splits. Point and say each word together.

At the end the last a says "uh" (banana has two)

ba·nan·a

piz·za

ze·bra

pan·da

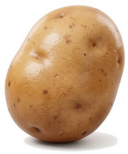
so·fa

At the start the first vowel says "uh" (pajamas has two)

bal·loon

ca·noe

pa·ja·mas


po·ta·to

to·ma·to

In the last part a quiet "uh" before the last letter

lem·on

ba·con

li·on

pen·cil

cac·tus

In the middle some have more than one!

oc·to·pus

di·no·saur

as·tro·naut

el·e·phant

hip·po·pot·a·mus

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Schwa words list

Schwa is the lazy **"uh"** a vowel makes in a quiet part of a word. Every vowel can say it. The lazy letter is **purple and underlined**. Say each word the way you talk.

Schwa words by letter

a	banana sofa pizza zebra panda balloon about away salad giant pajamas canoe
e	seven open oven chicken children problem camel bagel elephant telephone
i	pencil pupil (most lazy i's sound like a quick i: see below)
o	lemon wagon dragon bacon melon lion pilot carrot octopus dinosaur potato tomato
u	cactus walrus circus possum minus upon ambulance hippopotamus
y	y can spell schwa, but not in words a young child reads.

Sometimes it sounds like a quick i

rabbit basket muffin dolphin robin cabin rocket helmet magnet planet animal pelican

It says **"uh"** or a quick **"i"**, depending on who's talking. No purple: close calls.

Sometimes the vowel almost disappears

kitten mitten button kitchen garden frozen tunnel pretzel

Many people say **"kit-n"** and **"but-n"**. Fine to read, not first examples. No purple.

Little words that say "uh" in a sentence

a	the	was	of
a cat	the dog	it was fun	a cup of milk

Alone, **a** says "ay" and **was** has a short u. In a quick sentence they go lazy and say "uh".

Not schwa words many schwa lists online include these

other · mother · love
A strong "uh", not a lazy one: the o says short u in the loud part.

teacher · doctor
Bossy r, not schwa: the -er and -or have an r sound.

robot
No lazy vowel in American English: ro-bot, both vowels say their own sound.

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Schwa Sound Words

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Where is the lazy vowel? cut out and sort the 10 cards

Grown-up says each word the way you talk. Listen for the lazy **"uh"**. Is it at the **start** of the word or at the very **end**?

tu·ba

po·lice

ko·a·la

a·larm

so·fa

bal·loon

lla·ma

co·coon

co·bra

ca·noe

Lazy at the start like a·bout	Lazy at the end like so·fa

Where is the "uh"? say it, then tick one box

Say the word and find the **"uh"**. Is it in the **loud part** (like **sun**) or a **quiet part** (like so·**fa**)?

sun	☐ loud	☐ quiet	**sofa**	☐ loud	☐ quiet	**cup**	☐ loud	☐ quiet
lemon	☐ loud	☐ quiet	**bus**	☐ loud	☐ quiet	**pencil**	☐ loud	☐ quiet

Read it out loud

Grown-up reads it first the way you talk. Then your turn. The little words go lazy too.

1. **The panda sat on the sofa.**
2. **A zebra ate a banana.**
3. **Dad got a lemon and a melon.**
4. **The camel is in the wagon.**
5. **Seven balloons went up.**
6. **Mom had pizza and a salad.**

Answer key. Lazy at the start: **police, alarm, cocoon, balloon, canoe**. Lazy at the end: **tuba, koala, llama, cobra, sofa**. "Uh" in the loud part: **sun, cup, bus**. In a quiet part: **sofa, lemon, pencil**.

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