# Reductions

One of the impacts of the rhythm of English is the occurrence of reductions. These suprasegmentals are part of the reason that new English language learners feel like there is a big difference between the English they hear in class and the English they hear in authentic situations. As always, when we talk about prosody and pronunciation patterns, the context of speaking and the individuals' regional and personal patterns will influence how language is actually used.

### Objectives

1. Recognize common you, of, have, and to reductions
2. Use common you, of, have, and to reductions
3. Recognize linking patterns
4. Use common linking patterns to improve fluency

## Reductions

Reductions are when the speaker does not say a word the way it is spelled. The definition of reduce is to make smaller. That is precisely what a spoken reduction does. It takes a common word or phrase and makes the sounds fast to use. Reduce can also mean to weaken, which a spoken reduction also does by taking a word and removing the stress so that other words in the sentence receive more focus.

Reduction is also important in English as it conveys one’s feeling in the conversation. If you say word for word “I want to go to the store,” the listener might think that you are demanding to go to the store. It might leave a negative feeling between you and the other person. However, by saying “I wanna go to the store” gives the impression that you will be ok if you do not end up going to the store. Reduction usually occurs informally, and it is only used in the written form in very informal writing such as text messages between friends

## You Reductions

As stated above, reductions are very common in informal speaking. This results in the frequent reduction of you in conversations to cha or ya/ja.

### Examples

#### The cha pronunciation is used after a word (usually a verb or modal) that ends with t.

bet you = betcha

don't you = don'tcha

can't you = can'tcha

get you = getcha

got you = gotcha

want you = wantcha

#### The ya pronunciation is used after a word that ends with a vowel.

do you = doya

are you = areya

#### The ja pronunciation is used after a word that ends with a d.

would you = wouldja

could you = couldja

should you = shouldja

did you = didja

## Of and Have Reductions

The words of often sounds like the unstressed schwa sound ("uh") and have often sounds like the word of.

### Examples

#### The reduction of of is a simple schwa (uh, ə, sound in cut) sound that is represented with an a.

kind of = kinda

lots of = lotsa

sort of = sorta

out of = outta

#### The use of have in the present perfect is reduced to the contraction pronunciation in most speech.

The pronunciation of this in many American accents is similar to of.

may have = may've

must have = must've

might have = might've

#### Because the pronunciation is so similar to of, the present perfect have can also be reduced to a.

would have = woulda

could have = coulda

should have = shoulda

## To Reductions

This reduction is very common in spoken English. The to sound again reduces to a simple schwa (uh, ə, sound in cut) sound that is represented with an a.

### Examples

gotta

oughtta

hasta

wanna (want to, the t sound is dropped)

gonna (future going to, -ing sound is changed to n)

hafta (have to, v sound softens to an f)

### Exercise 1: Listen

Here is a video about two women with very different diets. Listen for examples of reductions.

Transcript with Marked Reductions

I really need to focus on eating what I like. A **lotta** junk food, usually.

I'm never **gonna** healthy, so... I think for me it's **gonna** be hard mentally. But physically it's **gonna** be harder for you.

I think one **outta** 10

I think I'm

**gonna**

do terrible.

And then I **gotta** wheatgrass shot

because they had it.

She's

**gonna**

have a wheatgrass shot

But it's

**kinda**

 good.

So I was getting **kinda** hangry.

**Whatcha**

 drinking?

Oh, I thought it was

**gonna**

 taste like really bad

I'm just **gonna** admit it.

I **shoulda** been better. I

 **shoulda** stuck to the experiment more.

And I learned about a **lotta** other ingredients

that I didn't know about.

That's all I'm **gonna** say about that.

### Exercise 2: Music of English

1. Choose a song in English with your partner. It would be best to choose an American English performer but not necessary.
2. Look at the lyrics and listen to the song.
3. Make a list of examples of reductions in the song.
4. Share the examples with the class.

### Exercise 3: Listen & Repeat

1. Your teacher will tell a story one sentence at a time.
2. After each sentence, think of how to say the same idea using reductions.
3. Share your sentence with a partner before the teacher continues.

Read this online at <https://edtechbooks.org/advanced_mid_listening__speaking/reductions>