

Introduction

Stress is the accent given to a syllable or word to give it more importance and to make it stand out among other syllables or words. Because of the relative force or prominence given to a syllable or word, the speaker gives accurate signals as to what ideas he wants emphasized, thus contributing to bringing out meaning and emotional attitude in his communication.

Stressed syllables and words are characterized by (a) **force or intensity**, (b) **higher pitch**, and (c) **longer duration**.

Notice the stressed syllables in these words.

proFESsor seMEster comMITtee CATegory

Word Stress

Simple guidelines on word stress:

1. Most two-syllabled words are stressed on the first syllable.

Mother

Actual

Labor

2. Many compound nouns usually receive strong stress on the first component.

sweetheart

pocketbook

tablecloth

3. Compound verbs have strong stress on the second component.

get out

put off

look out

4. Pronouns ending in “self” have strong stress on the last syllable.

yourself

myself

ourselves

5. Numbers ending in “ty” receive strong stress on the first syllable to distinguish them from words ending in “teen” which receive strong stress on the last syllable.

thirty - thirteen

forty - fourteen

6. Some words maybe used either as nouns or verbs. When used as nouns, these words receive strong stress on the first syllable. When used as verbs, the stress is on the last syllable.

Noun Verb

suspect - suspect

insult - insult

subject - subject

7. A suffix added to a word does not affect the accent of the root word:

allow - allowance beauty - beautify

arrive - arrival mercy - merciful

8. Words with suffixes **-tion, -sion, -ic, -ical, -ity** are accented on the syllable before the ending.

conclude - conclusion

photograph - photographic

liable - liability

music - musical

Sentence Stress

1. Stress words are considered **CONTENT WORDS** such as:

- Nouns e.g. kitchen, Peter
- (most) principle verbs e.g. visit, construct
- Adjectives e.g. beautiful, interesting
- Adverbs e.g. often, carefully

2. Non-stressed words are considered **FUNCTION WORDS** such as:

- Determiners e.g. the, a, some, a few
- Auxiliary verbs e.g. don't, am, can, were
- Prepositions e.g. before, next to, opposite
- Conjunctions e.g. but, while, as
- Pronouns e.g. they, she, us

Drills on Stress Pattern of Words

A. Read the following words aloud giving extra emphasis on the syllable printed in capital letters.

Adult	TEStimony	seMESter	abbREviate
ANcestor	CERemony	aPOSTrophe	asSIMilate
ALmost	CEmetery	comPOSer	toMORrow
ALlegory	ESsence	curRICulum	acCREdit
AWKward	DEtriment	soCIEty	progRESSive
ABsolute	PRACTicable	triBUnal	reLUCtant
Affable	LUnacy	deTERmine	enDUrance
ALternate	LAmentable	aBOLish	inTERment
ACronym	Irresistable	rePLEnish	inCUMBent
ADmiral	SEnator	esTABlish	imPEDiment
ADjective	Orator	inTERpret	exORbitant
DEficit	LIterature	deVELOp	apPREciate

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DOminant	TELEvision	emBArrass	acCOUNTant
MENdicant	RHEtoric	conTINue	comMITtee
TEStament	MISerable	conTRIBUTE	proFESSor
CATegory	CATHolic	reMITtance	COLleague

B. In words ending in non-syllabic suffixes, like -ette or -ee, -eer, -esce, -esque, the main stress is generally on the first vowel of the suffix.

BuccaNEER	caREER	interFERE
casSETTE	engiNEER	groTESQUE
DisaGREE	goaTEE	arREARS
EfferVESCE	chimpanZEE	sinCERE
LicenSEE	pictuRESQUE	JapaNESE
SilhouETTE	seVERE	araBESQUE
AppoinTEE	coaLESCE	lebaNESE

C. Compound words with main stress on the first word

AIRmail	BACKbone	CLASSmate
ACTION plan	BLACK list	DOORbell
AGE group	BIRTH control	EAVESdrop
AIRline	BACKground	FLIGHT nurse
ANYbody	BRAIN drain	NEWSpaper

D. Different stresses as Nouns and Verbs

NOUNS

VERBS

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ABStract	absTRACT
ADdict	adDICT
COMpound	comPOUND
CONduct	conDUCT
CONtest	conTEST
CONtent	conTENT
CONvict	conVICT
EScort	esCORT
EXport	exPORT
IMport	imPORT
INsult	inSULT
OBject	obJECT
PREsent	preSENT
PROject	proJECT
REbel	reBEL
REcord	reCORD
PROtest	proTEST
SURvey	surVEY

E. Speaking Numbers on Telephone

Each digit should be spoken separately. Main stress is given on the last number of each group.

369	three six NINE
197	one nine SEVEN
915 14 15	nine one five, one four, one FIVE

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0916 705 5005 zero nine one SIX, seven zero FIVE,
five zero zero FIVE

0724 845 66 zero seven two FOUR, eight four FIVE, double SIX

F. Prepositional Verbs

add UP	bear OUT	fall BACK
get OUT	bite OFF	pass ON
back OFF	bring FORTH	pick UP
check IN/OUT	break UP	pass AWAY
come aCROSS	come ABOUT	take OFF
come BACK	lay OFF	write OFF

CHALLENGER

A. Rewrite in CAPITAL LETTERS the syllable having main stress in each of the following compounds words.

1. afternoon _____
2. backbone _____
3. dry-clean _____
4. full stop _____
5. make up _____
6. overcome _____
7. put up _____
8. Saturday _____
9. August _____
10. viewpoint _____

11. drop out _____
12. give up _____
13. outline _____
14. however _____
15. showcase _____
16. September _____
17. weekend _____
18. write off _____
19. stop over _____
20. workshop _____
21. myself _____
22. testimony _____
23. professor _____
24. ceremony _____
25. thirteen _____
26. orator _____
27. abyss _____
28. deficit _____
29. determine _____
30. appreciate _____

B. Write down 'C' for content and 'F' for function.

1. arrive
2. to
3. just
4. swiftly
5. a
6. soft
7. next to
8. CPU

9. open
10. had
11. in
12. association
13. in order to
14. courage
15. much
16. jumping
17. in front of
18. Miko
19. her
20. However
21. visit
22. pretty
23. and
24. stay
25. I

C. Underline the stressed words in the following sentences. After you have identified the stressed words, practice reading the selection aloud.

1. The ice on the river melts quickly under the warm March sun.
2. Canada is a rich country, but still it has many poor people.
3. The package arrived in the morning, but the courier left before I could check the contents.
4. Sir John A. Macdonald had a serious drinking problem; when sober, however, he could be a formidable foe in the House of Commons.
5. Although my friend invited me to a party, I do not want to go.
6. Those beautiful small red-blue African birds, which we saw at the zoo last week, actually fly around the world every year looking for a mate.
7. A black snake bit a young boy in the park yesterday.
8. These birds fly south in winter.
9. The lion roared and growled at the small foxes loudly.
10. The teacher explained the grammar rule to the students.
11. Ottawa is the capital of Canada, but Toronto is the capital of Ontario.

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12. Democracy is a noble goal; it is important, however, to protect the minority from the tyranny of the majority.

13. I do not own a Porsche.

14. Call your father as soon as you arrive in Spain.

15. I ate the past and left the restaurant.

16. Unless my friend postpones her visit from Germany, I will not have time to study for my exam.

17. Susanne wanted to be here, but she cannot come because her car is in the shop.

18. The basketball game was cancelled because it was raining.

19. The players stayed late for practice.