

STRESS & INTONATION

Stress is the degree of force with which a speaker pronounces a sound or a syllable. When we speak English we do not articulate all the syllables in the same way. Some syllables are said with greater force than others. The sound which receives greater stress is graphically shown by a vertical bar 'placed above and before the syllable which has more stress. This is known as primary stress. The syllable which is expressed by a little force is indicated by a vertical bar before and below it. This is called the secondary stress.

Noun

'conduct

'project

Verb

con'duct

pro'ject

Sentence Stress Illustrated:

Sentences	Meaning
1. <i>I don't think she would write it.</i>	I don't think that, but someone else does.
2. <i>I DON'T think she will listen to him.</i>	It is not true that I think that.

3. I don't THINK she will listen to him.	I don't think that, I know that. Or: I don't think that, but I could be wrong.
4. I don't think SHE will listen to him.	I think that someone other than her will listen to him.
5. I don't think she WILL listen to him.	I think that she is will not be willing or agreeable to listening to him.
6. I don't think she will LISTEN to him.	Instead of listening, she might talk to him.
7. I don't think she will listen to HIM .	I think that she will listen to someone else than him.

Intonation:

When we speak the voice goes up and down. We can say a word group definitely, hesitantly, angrily or kindly. The rise and fall of pitch in voice is called intonation.

English, there are **three intonation patterns**:

1. **Rise** 
2. **Full fall** 
3. **Partial fall** 

- I don't think he should get the job.

Meaning: *Somebody else thinks he should get the job.*

- I **don't** think he should get the job.

Meaning: *It's not true that I think he should get the job.*

- I don't **think** he should get that job.




Meaning: *That's not really what I mean. OR I'm not sure he'll get that job.*

- I don't think **he** should get that job.
Meaning: *Somebody else should get that job.*
- I don't think he **should** get that job.
Meaning: *In my opinion it's wrong that he's going to get that job.*
- I don't think he should **get** that job.
Meaning: *He should have to earn (be worthy of, work hard for) that job.*
- I don't think he should get **that** job.
Meaning: *He should get another job.*
- I don't think he should get that **job**.
Meaning: *Maybe he should get something else instead.*

What is Word Stress?

In English, we do not say each syllable with the same force or strength. In one word, we accentuate ONE syllable. We say **one** syllable very **loudly** (big, strong, important) and **all the other syllables** very **quietly**.

Let's take 3 words: **photograph**, **photographer** and **photographic**. Do they sound the same when spoken? No. Because we accentuate (stress) ONE syllable in each word. And it is not always the same syllable. So the **shape** of each word is different.

	shape	total syllables	stressed syllable
PHO TO GRAPH		3	#1
PHO TO GRAPH ER		4	#2
PHO TO GRAPH IC		4	#3

--	--	--	--

This happens in ALL words with 2 or more syllables: **TEACHer**, **JaPAN**, **CHINa**, **aBOVE**, **converSAtion**, **INteresting**, **imPORtant**, **deMAND**, **etCETera**, **etCETera**, **etCETera**

The syllables that are not stressed are **weak** or **small** or **quiet**. Native speakers of English listen for the **STRESSED** syllables, not the weak syllables. If you use word stress in your speech, you will instantly and automatically improve your pronunciation **and your comprehension**.

Try to hear the stress in individual words each time you listen to English - on the radio, or in films for example. Your first step is to **HEAR** and recognise it. After that, you can **USE** it!

Rules of Word Stress in English

There are two very simple rules about word stress:

1. **One word has only one stress.** (One word cannot have two stresses. If you hear two stresses, you hear two words. Two stresses cannot be one word. It is true that there can be a "secondary" stress in some words. But a secondary stress is much smaller than the main [primary] stress, and is only used in long words.)
2. **We can only stress vowels, not consonants.**

Here are some more, rather complicated, rules that can help you understand where to put the stress. But do not rely on them too much, because there are many exceptions. It is better to try to "feel" the music of the language and to add the stress naturally.

1 Stress on first syllable

rule	example
------	---------

Most 2-syllable nouns	PRESent, EXport, CHIna, TAbLe
Most 2-syllable adjectives	PRESent, SLEnDer, CLEVer, HAPpy

2 Stress on last syllable

rule	example
Most 2-syllable verbs	to preSENT, to exPORT, to deCIDE, to beGIN

There are many two-syllable words in English whose meaning and class change with a change in stress. The word **present**, for example is a two-syllable word. If we stress the first syllable, it is a noun (gift) or an adjective (opposite of absent). But if we stress the second syllable, it becomes a verb (to offer). More examples: the words **export**, **import**, **contract** and **object** can all be nouns or verbs depending on whether the stress is on the first or second syllable.

3 Stress on penultimate syllable (penultimate = second from end)

Rule	example
Words ending in -ic	GRAPHic, geoGRAPHic, geoLOGic
Words ending in -sion and -tion	teleVIsion, reveLAtion

For a few words, native English speakers don't always "agree" on where to put the stress. For example, some people say **teleVIsion** and others say **TELevision**. Another example is: **CONTrovery** and **conTROvery**.

4 Stress on ante-penultimate syllable (ante-penultimate = third from end)

Rule	example
Words ending in -cy , -ty , -phy and -gy	deMOcracy, dependaBility, phoTOgraphy, geOLOgy

Words ending in -al	CRItical, geoLOGical
----------------------------	----------------------

5 Compound words (words with two parts)

Rule	example
For compound nouns , the stress is on the first part	BLACKbird, GREENhouse
For compound adjectives , the stress is on the second part	bad-TEMpered, old-FASHioned
For compound verbs , the stress is on the second part	to underSTAND, to overFLOW