



English Pronunciation

A student's guide to stress



Stress

- “Stress” refers to the way emphasis is given to
 - syllables in a word
 - syllables in words in a sentence
- Stress is related to rhythm in speaking
 - English is a “stress-timed” language. This means that the rhythm falls on stressed words in a sentence

Word Stress

Say the words on the next slide aloud.

How many syllables are there?

Word Stress

depend

dependent

independent

independently

Word Stress

de•pend (2)

de•pen•dent (3)

in•de•pen•dent (4)

in•de•pen•dent•ly (5)

Word Stress

Which syllables are stressed?

Word Stress

de•pend (2)

de•pen•dent (3)

in•de•pen•dent (4)

in•de•pen•dent•ly (5)

Word Stress

de•pend (2)

de•pen•dent (3)

in•de•pen•dent (4)

in•de•pen•dent•ly (5)

Word Stress

- Word stress does not usually change
- It is a feature of the word itself
- This means that you can use a dictionary to check word stress

Sentence Stress

Say the sentences on the next slide aloud.

Which words sound more prominent?
(i.e. louder, longer, stronger)

Sentence Stress

It depends

She's very dependent on him

I'm a very independent person

I can work independently

Sentence Stress

It depends

She's **very** dependent on **him**

I'm a **very** independent **person**

I can **work** independently

Sentence Stress

Notice that the stressed syllable in a sentence can change to convey meaning:

I said I'm very in•de•pen•dent

not de•pen•dent

Sentence Stress

Read the nursery rhyme on the next slide.
How many beats are there in each line?

A nursery rhyme is a simple poem for children

Three Blind Mice

Three blind mice

Three blind mice

See how they run

See how they run

They all ran after the farmer's wife
who cut off their tails with a carving knife!

Did ever you see such a sight in your life
as three blind mice!

Three Blind Mice

Three blind mice (3 beats)

Three blind mice (3 beats)

See how they run (3 beats)

See how they run (3 beats)

They all ran after the farmer's wife (4 beats)
who cut off their tails with a carving knife! (4 beats)

Did ever you see such a sight in your life (4 beats)
as three blind mice! (3 beats)

Further practice

Practice activities and more examples can be found in;

“English Pronunciation in Use. Intermediate”
by Mark Hancock.
Cambridge University Press.

Vowels can become weak

to the cinema

/tu: ði: sinəmə/

/tə ðə sinəmə/

fish and chips

/fɪʃ ænd tʃɪps/

/fɪ ʃən tʃɪps/

a cup of tea

/æ kʌp ɒv ti:/

/ə kʌ pəv ti:/