

Chapter Two: The Stress

Complex Word Stress

➤ *Complex words are of two major types:*

- ❖ words made from a basic word form (which we will call the stem), with the addition of an affix; and
- ❖ **compound words**, which are made of two (or occasionally more) independent English words (e.g. 'icecream', 'armchair').

1. **Words with affixes:** affixes are of two sorts in English:

1.1. **prefixes**, which come before the stem (e.g. prefix 'un-' + stem 'pleasant' → 'unpleasant')

1.2. **suffixes**, which come after the stem (e.g. stem 'good' + suffix '-ness' → 'goodness').

○ Affixes have one of three possible effects on word stress:

1.The affix itself receives the primary stress	2.The word is stressed as if the affix were not there	3.The stress remains on the stem, not the affix, but is shifted to a different syllable
Eg : semi+circle → 'semɪsɜ:kəl:	Eg : market –marketing → 'mɑ:kɪtɪŋ	Eg : magnet-magnetic → mæg'netɪk

○ There are so many suffixes that it will only be possible here to examine a small proportion of them: we will concentrate on those which are common and productive - that is, are applied to a considerable number of stems and could be applied to more to make new English words

➤ *Table 1:*

Suffixes carrying primary stress themselves
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● '-ette': 'cigarette' ,sɪgr'et; 'laundrette' ,ləʊndr'et ● 'esque': 'picturesque' ,pɪktʃr'esk ● '-ee': 'refugee' ,refju'dʒi:; 'evacuee' ɪ,vækju'i: ● '-eer': 'mountaineer' ,maʊntɪ'nɪə; 'volunteer' ,vɒlən'tɪə ● '-ese': 'Portuguese' ,pɔ:tʃə'gi:z; 'journalese' ,dʒɜ:nli:z

➤ *Table 2*

Suffixes that do not affect stress placement	
•	'-able': 'comfort' 'kʌmfət; 'comfortable' 'kʌmfətəbl
•	'-age': 'anchor' 'æŋkə; 'anchorage' 'æŋkridʒ
•	'-al': 'refuse' (verb) rɪ'fju:z; 'refusal' rɪ'fju:zl
•	'-en': 'wide' 'waɪd; 'widen' 'waɪdn
•	'-ful': 'wonder' 'wʌndə; 'wonderful' 'wʌndəflɪ
•	'-ing': 'amaze' ə'meɪz; 'amazing' ə'meɪzɪŋ
•	'-like': 'bird' 'bɜ:d; 'birdlike' 'bɜ:dlaɪk
•	'-less': 'power' 'paʊə; 'powerless' 'paʊələs
•	'-ly': 'hurried' 'hʌrɪd; 'hurriedly' 'hʌrɪdli
•	'-ment' (noun): 'punish' 'pʌnɪʃ; 'punishment' 'pʌnɪʃmənt
•	'-ness': 'yellow' 'jeləʊ; 'yellowness' 'jeləʊnəs
•	'-ous': 'poison' 'pɔɪzn; 'poisonous' 'pɔɪznəs
•	'-fy': 'glory' 'glɔ:ri; 'glorify' 'glɔ:rɪfaɪ
•	'-wise': 'other' 'ʌðə; 'otherwise' 'ʌðəwaɪz
•	'-y' (adjective or noun): 'fun' 'fʌn; 'funny' 'fʌni

Note:

- ('-ish' in the case of adjectives does not affect stress placement: 'devil' 'devl; 'devilish' 'devlɪʃ; however, verbs with stems of more than one syllable always have the stress on the syllable immediately preceding 'ish' - for example, 'replenish' rɪ'plenɪʃ, 'demolish' dɪ'mɒlɪʃ)

Suffixes that influence stress in the stem			
Primary stress is on the last syllable of the stem.			
•	'-eous':	'advantage' əd'vɑ:ntɪdʒ;	'advantageous' ,ædvən'teɪdʒəs
•	'-graphy':	'photo' 'fəʊtəʊ;	'photography' fa'tɒgrəfi
•	'-ial':	'proverb' 'prɒvɜ:b;	'proverbial' prə'vɜ:biəl
•	'-ic':	'climate' 'klaɪmət;	'climatic' klaɪ'mætɪk
•	'-ion':	'perfect' 'pɜ:fɪkt;	'perfection' pə'fekʃn
•	'-ious':	'injure' 'ɪndʒə;	'injurious' ɪn'dʒʊəriəs
•	'-ty':	'tranquil' 'træŋkwɪl;	'tranquillity' træŋ'kwɪləti
•	'-ive':	'reflex' rɪ'fleks;	'reflexive' rɪ'fleksɪv

Note: when the suffixes '-ance', '-ant' and '-ary' are attached to single-syllable stems, the stress is almost always placed on the stem (e.g. 'guidance', 'sealant', 'dietary').

○ **Prefixes:**

Because prefixes do not affect stress placement, the best treatment seems to be to say that stress in words with prefixes is governed by the same rules as those for polysyllabic words without prefixes

Exercise 1:

Mark the stress on the following words with justification according to the influence of suffixes .

Word	Stress placement	Justification
refugee		
mountaineer		
Portuguese		
cigarette		
arabesque		
Advantageous		
photography'		
proverbial climatic		
perfection injurious		
tranquility reflexive		
comfortable		
refusal		
wonderful		
birdlike		
glorify		
otherwise		
poisonous		
punishment		

Stress in Compound Words

A compound word main characteristic is that it can be analysed into two words, both of which can exist independently as English words. Some compounds are made of more than two words

As far as stress is concerned, the question is quite simple. When is primary stress placed on the first constituent word of the compound and when on the second?

Possible Stress Rules:

1. Compound nouns normally has the stress on the first element
'typewriter' 'taɪpraɪtə 'car ferry' 'kɑ:feri 'sunrise' 'sʌnraɪz 'suitcase' 'su:tkeɪs 'teacup' 'ti:kʌp
2. Compounds with an adjectival first element and the -ed morpheme at the end receive stress on the second element
.bad-'tempered ,half-'timbered ,heavy-'handed
3. Compounds in which the first element is a number in some form also tend to have final stress:
,three-'wheeler ,second-'class ,five-'finger
4. Compounds functioning as adverbs are usually final-stressed
,head'first ,North-'East ,down'stream
5. Compounds which function as verbs and have an adverbial first element take final stress
,down'grade ,back-'pedal ,ill-'treat

Word-class pairs / Homographs

These are pairs of two-syllable words with identical spelling which differ from each other in stress placement, apparently according to word class (noun, verb or adjective). In this

case, the stress is placed on the second syllable of the verb but on the first syllable of the noun or adjective. Some common examples are given below (V = verb, A = adjective, N = noun):

Spelling Form	Noun/Adjective	Verb
abstract	'æbstrækt (A)	æb'strækt (V)
conduct	'kɒndʌkt (N)	kən'dʌkt (V)
contract	'kɒntrækt (N)	kən'trækt (V)
contrast	'kɒntrɑːst (N)	kən'trɑːst (V)
desert	'dezət (N)	dɪ'zɜːt (V)
escort	'eskɔːt (N)	ɪ'skɔːt (V)
export	'ekspɔːt (N)	ɪk'spɔːt (V)
import	'ɪmpɔːt (N)	ɪm'pɔːt (V)
insult	'ɪnsʌlt (N)	ɪn'sʌlt (V)
object	'ɒbdʒekt (N)	əb'dʒekt (V)
perfect	'pɜːfɪkt (A)	pə'fekt (V)
permit	'pɜːmɪt (N)	pə'mɪt (V)
present	'preznt (N, A)	pri'zent (V)
produce	'prɒdjuːs (N)	prə'djuːs (V)
protest	'prəʊtest (N)	prə'test (V)
rebel	'reɪbəl (N)	ri'bel (V)
record	'rekɔːd (N, A)	ri'kɔːd (V)
subject	'sʌbdʒekt (N)	səb'dʒekt (V)

Exercise 2 : Transcribe the following words and mark the stress

Nouns	transcription	Verbs	Transcription
a) language b) captain c) career d) paper		a) protect b) clamber c) festoon d) detest	

Exercise 3 : Fill in the table with missing form, and mark the stress.

Spelling	Nouns	Verbs
abstract conduct contract contrast desert escort export import		
	'insʌlt (N) 'ɒbdʒekt (N) 'pɜ:fɪkt (A) 'pɜ:mɪt (N) 'preznt (N, A)	
		prə'dju:s (V) prə'test (V) rɪ'bel (V) rɪ'kɔ:d (V) səb'dʒekt (V)